The separatist view of the west's economic position in Confederation is perhaps best summarized by Doug Christie's recurring statement that "western Canada doesn't need anything from Quebec or Ontario or Ottawa that we couldn't get better, quicker and cheaper somewhere else" (e.g. Radio CJCA, Edmonton, February 6, 1981).[49]

Another element of hinterland status — little or no influence in national decision making — is also decried in the separatist ideology. People in the movement view the history of the west as a succession of encroachments by the federal government which western Canadians could never stop, given the existing political institutions. A West-Fed pamphlet reads:

> The rape of the west and its people's resources is no idle theory, nor an idle complaint. It's a fact of economics and history. The names of our earlier defenders echo across time like battle cries: Riel, Poundmaker, the Winnipeg General Strike, Social Credit, Progressives, CCF, United Farmers and more. Their struggles against central Canadian exploitation sparked the social reforms that are this country's proudest achievement. But they could not stop the flow of wealth eastward. The west just did not have the votes.
>
> We still don't.

Similarly, Doug Christie claims that "there hasn't been a solution from the Progressives, the United Farmers of Alberta, the Progressive Conservative Party, the NDP or all the protest movements of western Canada including West-Fed

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[49] It seems that the separatists would have little difficulty in convincing western Canadians of the economic feasibility of an independent west. In the Canada West Foundation survey, 60% of the respondents agreed with the statement: "Western provinces have sufficient resources and industry to survive without the rest of Canada".

[that has] changed that much the direction of Canada to the betterment of the western Canadian people" (Speech at the Edmonton Inn, July 14, 1981). The present political institutions are said to permit "taxation without political representation" ("A History of the Committee for Western Independence", p.5) and are generally seen as merely sanctifying the economic domination of the region.[50] Finally, Canada's political system is considered by the separatists to be an instrument of cultural imperialism. A WCC information sheet reads:

> The Federal Government spends over One Billion Dollars annually on bilingualism and biculturalism. All of Canada is to be bilingual except Quebec, which will be unilingual (French).[51]

As was the case with the United Farmers of Alberta, the west's political powerlessness on the federal scene has led members of the movement to view Canadian federalism as illegitimate or undemocratic. (They cite the 1980 federal election as an illustration of this.) An independent west would solve this crisis of democracy, they claim, since it would allow representatives elected by *westerners* to govern the region. The present situation, in which westerners have only a limited influence over who forms the national government, has led the movement to go even a step further — members advocate a system of referendum, initiative and recall for the independent west, i.e. direct popular control of the government.[52] This is a clear indication that the present system does not give expression to members' political needs.

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[50] The view that Canada is governed in the interests of Ontario and Quebec is not limited to western separatists. In the Canada West Foundation Survey, 84% of the sample agreed with the statement: "The West usually gets ignored in national politics because the political parties depend upon Quebec and Ontario for most of their votes".

[51] Roger Gibbins (1980, pp. 176-180) suggests that much of the anti-French Canadian sentiment in the west can be attributed to the western perception that the federal government is hyper-sensitive to the needs of Quebec, but indifferent towards the grievances of western Canada.

There have been major criticisms of the above 'exploited hinterland' position taken by the separatists and other alienated westerners. T.K. Shoyama (1977), for example, suggests that insofar as transportation rates are based on political decisions rather than market requirements, such decisions have been made so as to benefit the west and the Atlantic provinces. Furthermore, Antal Deutsch (1977) argues that it is impossible to produce a "reasonable" cost/benefit analysis of Alberta's participation in Confederation since one cannot estimate the value attached by Albertans to the goods and services provided them by Ottawa.

A more comprehensive critique is provided by Kenneth H. Norrie (1979). He argues that many prairie economic grievances, such as those regarding tariffs, freight rates, the banking system, monetary policy and the regional distribution of secondary manufacturing industries, are in actuality a reflection of the west's position in a market economy rather than discriminatory policies introduced by the federal government.[53] With regard to secondary manufacturing, for example, he states:

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[52] For a discussion of direct democracy and farmers movements in western Canada, see Walter Young (1978, pp.9-10).

> The geographically peripheral areas of the country are just not feasible sites to naturally attract most types of secondary industry. ...Hinterland regions do not become industrial centers in a market economy, and the distribution of manufacturing industries across Canada is a simple reflection of this fact (p.132).

Similarly, with regard to freight rates, he points out that although low rates for feed grains discourage western meat packing, a raise in the rates would be detrimental to prairie grain growers (pp.138-9). Norrie's assessment of the legitimacy of western grievance with regard to natural resource revenues is somewhat different, however. He claims that

> ...the export tax on crude oil and the domestic price freeze are clearly regional burdens. There is a direct subsidy from the producing provinces to the federal government and to Canadian consumers of western oil to the extent of the difference between world and Canadian oil prices. The punitive features of this policy are even more apparent given that the federal government has not imposed similar measures on other types of products (p.139).[54]

The metropolis-hinterland perspective itself, like any other theoretical framework, has major drawbacks. One is that it may be difficult to establish who exploits whom and to what degree in international or inter-regional economic relationships. For example, since the formation of OPEC it has become clear that resource exporting regions have the capacity to to capture economic rent. On a different level, adherents to the perspective admit that social change does not result exclusively from metropolis-hinterland oppositions (e.g. Davis, 1971, p.18), so it offers only a limited explanation for societal change.

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[53] See Careless (1981), Owram (1981) and Pratt (1981) for further criticism of the 'exploited hinterland' thesis as an account of central Canada's treatment of the west.
[54] Pratt (1981, pp.169-70) also concedes this point.

In summary, the discussion of the three macro-theoretical perspectives above has shown that the separatists view the west as a hinterland of central Canada, and that they believe the regional exploitation would end with the creation of an independent west. Chapter Four shows that the movement is concerned with far more than the strictly regional issues of oil revenue sharing, freight rates, and the like. For the separatists, the federal government is not only draining the west's wealth into central Canada, it is also imposing a way of life on the region that members of the movement are fundamentally opposed to. Chapter Four argues that it is the loss of a conservative society, more than regional grievances per se, that has driven the separatists to undertake the formation of an independent country.

4. WESTERN SEPARATISM AS AN ULTRA-CONSERVATIVE MILLENARIAN MOVEMENT

> *What sort of country would the west be?*
> *The question often startles people at first. But when they think about it, the West's wonderful potential is a fascinating prospect.*
> *...The individual would be encouraged to achieve and allowed to enjoy the results of his labor, without being stigmatized as somehow anti-social for his success.*
> *...Westerners would face almost an explosion of opportunity in every field from medicine to music* (West-Fed Association of Alberta pamphlet).

The vision that the separatists have of an independent western Canada is not merely one in which the nation's parliament is elected solely by western Canadians, bilingualism is eliminated and goods can enter the country duty-free. The separatists favor a fundamental re-structuring of western Canadian society. This chapter will outline the changes that the separatists advocate for western Canada, and in doing so will demonstrate that western separatism goes beyond an attempt to redress regional grievances.

The social program put forth by the WCC is summarized succinctly on the front page of their 1982 Alberta campaign pamphlet: "Western Canada Concept: the right choice". Their program includes the abolition of gun control, and the introduction of "tougher bail and parole requirements for violent and sexual crimes" (Alberta WCC campaign pammphlet, 1982). Members also favor the return of captial punishment.[55] The WCC's proposed education program involves a "return to discipline in the school room" and increased emphasis on "the basic 'three R's'" (WCC information sheet). The party favors acknowledging "God as the supreme power" and "[t]he family as the most important institution on earth" (WCC information sheet). Other miscellaneous aspects of their social program include opposition to such things as abortion, metrication, and Canada's present immigration policies.

This desire to return to a more conservative moral system is also evident in references made to an imagined Golden Age in which Canada was a greater country and Canadians were somehow a more righteous people:

> The West is loyal to the old values, the virtues that built our land, but we demand a new economic order. Central Canada rejects the old values and rejects a new economic order. (West-Fed pamphlet).

Elmer Knutson elaboratres on this theme:

> Thus, we are ready and organized to let the other parts of Canada continue to endorse Trudeau's new constitution, and changes to a new Canada made up of Ontario, Quebec, and the Atlantic provinces, while we will be free to retain old Canada; reinstate some of the freedoms and rights which we have already lost;.... (Letter to West-Fed members, August, 1981)

Anti-intellectualism is also found in the separatist ideology. One WCC supporter boasts: "I have lived my entire life out here with you in the world of reality. I have worked in grass-roots newspaper publishing since high school. Over those 30-plus years I have *never* been involved in the fantasy world of partisan politics and 'educated' journalism" (Emphasis in original. *The West Can*, October 15, 1981, p. 1).

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[55] Like much of the legislation introduced by the Social Credit government of Alberta in the 1930s and 1940s, many WCC policies fall under federal jurisdiction. This would present problems, of course, if the party formed a provincial government but did not seek independence.

On the economic front, the WCC advocates laissez-faire capitalism. The party believes in the "[f]reedom of private enterprise with minimum government interference" (WCC information sheet). Members would like to eliminate the progressive income tax system, and favor the introduction of an "element of free enterprise" in the medical profession (*the Independencer*, January, 1982, p. 10).[56] They would also like to establish work programs for welfare and unemployment insurance recipients "to teach them how to work and pride and responsibility of a job" (*the Independencer*, January, 1982, p.10).[57]

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[56] Like many political groups that give lip service to the doctrine of laissez-faire capitalism, the WCC supports numerous programs that contradict this ideology. For instance, the WCC has endorsed in principle the Alberta government's mortgage and loan subsidy; they state that "[e]nergy should be available to Albertans at reasonable prices and need not reflect world prices" (WCC Policy Platform, adopted at the November, 1981 party convention); they claim that "Western Canada should control its own tariffs on imports" (WCC information sheet); and in the Alberta legislature Gordon Kesler supported "assistance programs to the oil and gas industry", and "the assistance program for truckers and the increase in the Farm Fuel Distribution Allowance" (*Western Canada Concept Party of Alberta Newsletter*, Vol.1, No.1, 1982).

[57] Shortly before the October 5, 1982 call for a provincial election, the Lougheed government announced plans to put welfare recipients to work in their community on a trial basis. This scheme, like the government's tentative plans to sell Pacific Western Airlines, may have been designed to appease WCC supporters.

Their economic policy also involves opposition to government subsidy of private enterprise. Doug Christie was fond of chastising Ottawa for subsidizing Chrysler and Massey-Ferguson; Howard Thompson (when he was a WCC supporter) wanted to "[g]et the [oil and gas] industry off welfare" and "eliminate all grants, rebates, subsidies and bureaucracies which administer them" (Howard Thompson WCC leadership candidate brochure, 1982).[58]

In keeping with their laissez-faire economic philosophy, the separatists express strong anti-statist sentiments. Allan Robertson, an early separatist from British Columbia, writes that "[s]aying 'good government' is like saying 'good poison'" (Western Equality Movement[59] circular, 1975). Possibly the worst form of government incursion into citizens' rights, for the separatists, would be the denial of property rights. Party member Gerald Freeman claims that "the difference between a western democracy and a communist state is that the communists don't have property rights and they aren't allowed to own weapons" (*the Independencer*, April, 1982). Property rights are also given an exalted position by WCC supporter Dr. Ruth Gorman:

> Our ancestors all came, at great sacrifice, to this country seeking property rights, and in our life two groups of young men faught and died to preserve those rights. It should not now be lost... nor turned over to politicians (Article by Ms. Gorman

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[58] Elsewhere in the brochure, Mr. Thompson castigates Premier Lougheed for investing Heritage Savings Trust Fund money in "eastern liquor and newspaper stocks" instead of Alberta's oil and gas industry.

[59] The Western Equality Movement was a forerunner of the WCC.

distributed by the WCC).

Along with their anti-statist position, the separatists express a general dislike of politicians. When he was campaigning in the Olds-Didsbury by-election, Gordon Kesler remarked: "I'm not a politician. I didn't come here to lie to you" (*The Globe and Mail*, April 12, 1982, p.4). Similarly, Ruth Gorman complains that "[p]oliticians have taken the government over" (*the Independencer*, January, 1982, p.1).

A major part of the separatists' political philosophy involves anti-'socialism' and anti-communism, with regard to both domestic and international affairs. Their views are alarmist in nature, however, closely resembling those of the McCarthy era. Doug Christie, for instance, has suggested that Prime Minister Trudeau leads a Moscow directed scheme to force socialism on Canadians (Canadian University Exchange Conference, University of Alberta, May 12, 1981). In fact the separatist literature abounds with accounts claiming that "central socialists" (an expression used in "Western Freedom Call" the WCC party song) are conspiring to establish a dictatorship in Canada. A WCC information sheet reads:

> Saturday, the day the Constitution officially came to Canada, can only be branded as a black day in the history of Canada. *The new constitution is a conspiracy in the true sense of the word.* Following the historic signing of the accord, Trudeau bragged that Ottawa was the big winner and held all the aces. They have the right of disallowance, declaratory power, expropriation powers under peace, order and good government, all the powers of a dictatorship, and the French language is entrenched

(My emphasis).

Conspiracy theory also surfaced at the July, 1982 WCC convention where then acting party leader Gordon Kesler warned of an international plot to destroy the party. The conspirators, he claimed, "are in control of vast numbers of major corporations, of banks, of the media, trade unions as well as political parties", and could be found in Russia, Europe, New York, Ottawa and Edmonton (*Edmonton Journal*, July 16, 1982, p.1). Kesler has even referred to the Lougheed government as the "Progressive Socialist Party of Alberta" (*Edmonton Journal*, July 25, 1982, p.A4). Similarly, while campaigning for the WCC leadership, Elmer Knutson warned his prospective followers that communists had infiltrated the party, and that Albertans must free themselves from "the tentacles of world internationalism" (*Edmonton Journal*, August 12, 1982, p.C2). Knutson named the United Nations, the World Council of Churches and the world's financial institutions as victims of international communism.

A note of caution is appropriate at this juncture. Thorstein Veblen (1920) has demonstrated that statements, particularly political statements, must not be taken merely at face value. This point is relevant to the present study in at least two respects. First, it may be the case that the 'separatists' do not really want to separate at all. The WCC's position on separation was especially suspicious when Gordon Kesler was Alberta Party Leader. Kesler constantly down-played the party's desire to form an independent western Canada, often to the consternation of fellow party members. For instance, while party Leader he was asked if he would prefer to keep Canada together, to which he replied: "Every sane, thinking individual would" (*The Calgary Herald*, October 8, 1982, p.A7). As we saw in Chapter Two, Kesler resigned when a non-binding resolution was passed to retain the reference to independence in the party constitution.[60] Although many of those opposed to independence left the party after the resolution was passed, the WCC's stand on the issue was not entirely clarified. Some members see independence as a last resort, while others consider it the only way to achieve their aims. Thus in considering the separatist ideology, we must recognize that although the WCC is officially in favor of independence, there is considerable reluctance to actively pursue it.

A second way in which Veblen's warning should be taken into consideration regards the somewhat incredible statements that the WCC has made. As we have seen above, communist plots to destroy the party, Trudeau taking part in a Moscow-directed scheme to set up a socialist dictatorship in Canada and other outlandish claims have all been presented as fact by the separatists.[61]

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[60] The reference reads: "We believe independence is the only way westerners can realize self-determination. In keeping with our philosophy on democracy, peace and justice, we feel the independence issue must be decided by the citizens through referendum".

[61] I do not wish to imply that the separatist ideology has no basis in fact whatever. There is a large body of academic literature, some of which was cited in Chapter Three, that

Party members may well believe these things, but it may be that such statements are made in a fit of emotion, or that they are designed to elicit an emotional response favorable to the political future of the WCC. And as with views on western independence, belief in these statements probably varies from member to member. It would be difficult, if not impossible, to ascertain whether members really believe such things, but one should always consider ulterior motives when remarks of this kind are made. Nonetheless, like Ellsworth and Harris (1962), who have studied the American far right, I believe that people making such statements generally believe them. People in a desperate situation crave an 'answer' to their problems, and as chapters Five and Six suggest, members of the separatist movement are in a desperate situation. Such explanations offer simple and comforting solutions which shift the burden of responsibility for one's predicament from oneself to some exterior cause. When such answers are offered by a charismatic leader they are, to some, irresistable.

The foregoing account of the separatists' social and economic philosophy provides ample evidence that the

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[61](cont'd)describes the west's quasi-colonial relationship with central Canada (as well as a group of critics who argue that this relationship has been exaggerated); and many of the things that the separatists decry are among the more serious issues facing contemporary industrial society, e.g. the deleterious consequences of bureaucracy, state infringement on individual liberties, etc. As Richard Hofstadter has written, "There is just enough reality at most points along the line to give a touch of credibility to the melodramatics of the pseudo-conservative imagination" (1965, p.63).

movement favors fundamental change in the west - a return to laissez-faire capitalism, rugged individualism and conservative religio-moral philosophy. In fact the separatist ideology suggests that the latter goals are paramount in the movement, and that independence is primarily an instrument that members would like to use to create an economically liberal and philosophically conservative society. As mentioned in the Introduction of this study, Kesler has admitted that "independence is not an end - it's a means to an end" (WCC rally, Edmonton, September 21, 1982). It is in this context that western separatism can be considered a millenarian movement.

Roger Gibbins makes a similar judgement of the Independent Alberta Association (IAA), a separatist group that was formed in 1974 but which fizzled out after attracting only a meagre following. He writes:

> While the major thrust of the IAA is ostensibly directed towards overcoming regional economic and political grievances, the public pronouncements of the organization make it quite apparent that its members are concerned with far more than regional discrimination and disparites. Underlying and feeding the surface sense of western alienation is a profound ideological disagreement with the direction of modern government. Concern over the power of unions, over the decline of the work ethic, and over the increasingly interventionist and regulatory thrust of government policies seems to rival western alienation itself as a theme in the organization. It seems, in fact, that one of the greatest appeals of independence is the opportunity it would present to build a new economic and political order among more philosophically conservative lines (1979, p. 161).

Gibbins comes to a similar conclusion with regard to the present separatist movement, claiming that separatism "becomes a means to an ideological end, an end that does not find its roots in the traditional concerns of western alienation" (1981, p.204).

We have seen that western separatism combines regional grievance with ultra-conservatism. The separatists' perception of regional injustice, however, is no doubt exaggerated by the fact that they see the federal government as destroying their way of life with its 'socialist' policies. Thus the west's political impotence in national politics, for example, is of grave concern since it allows this process to continue. The separatists recognize that there are no institutional channels available that would allow them to change society in the way they would like to, so they are seeking a political solution.

Western separatism is an extremist movement, and as S.M. Lipset suggests, extremist politics is "the politics of despair" (1970, p.3). Something must have brought about members' acute alienation with contemporary society, which they hope to ameliorate with the separatist movement. Chapters Five and Six discuss two groups in western Canadian society which have become dispossessed in recent years, and which may therefore be attempting to create a conservative society through the separatist movement: the petite bourgeoisie and Protestant fundamentalists. The focus on groups is predicated on the idea that *groups*, not individuals, join social movements (Oberschall, 1973, p.173).

5. PETITE BOURGEOIS SUPPORT FOR SEPARATISM

A small shopkeeper going down the hill is a dreadful thing to watch, but it isn't sudden and obvious like the fate of a working man who gets the sack and promptly finds himself on the dole. It's just a gradual chipping away of trade, with little ups and downs, a few shillings to the bad here, a few sixpences to the good there. Somebody who's dealt with you for years suddenly deserts you and goes to Sarazins'. Somebody else buys a dozen hens and gives you a weekly order for corn. You can still keep going. You're still 'your own master', always a little more worried and a little shabbier, with your capital shrinking all the time. You can go on like that for years, for a lifetime if you're lucky. George Orwell; *Coming Up For Air*

This chapter examines the hypothesis that the separatist movement has a class basis. The class in which the movement may be rooted is the petite bourgeoisie, which is comprised of small business people, independent farmers, independent professionals and other *self-employed* individuals who themselves employ few or no workers. As an introduction to this hypothesis, we will now briefly examine the role the petite bourgeoisie has played in previous western Canadian political movements.

In *Democracy in Alberta* (1953), C.B. Macpherson examines how Alberta has historically rejected the alternate-party system of government in favor of a "quasi-party" system. In his analysis he relies heavily the concept of class to explain how the United Farmers of Alberta and the Social Credit Party rose to power. Macpherson defines class as "the individual's relation to the means of productive labour" (p.14), or alternatively as "the ability or inability to dispose of labour – one's own and others'" (p.225). He argues that the UFA and Social Credit were instances of petite bourgeois radicalism. Macpherson defines the latter class as "those whose living comes neither from employing labour nor from selling the disposal of their labour" (p.225), which is consistent with our definition given above.

Macpherson first establishes that petite bourgeois farmers (i.e. those who own their own farms and operate them as family units, and employ little or no hired labor) were the numerically dominant class in Alberta when these two radical groups formed the government. He then argues (p.220) that the radicalism of the UFA and Social Credit was largely a reflection of the fact that members of this class were independent commodity producers in a region having quasi-colonial staus vis-a-vis the rest of Canada. This class, he claims, rebelled against "eastern imperialism", but fell short of a comprehensive condemnation of capitalist society in that its members upheld the sanctity of property rights. In brief, the petite bourgeoisie did not want to abolish the capitalist system, but rather improve its position within it.

With regard to the UFA, Macpherson holds that the relatively homogeneous class structure of the province[62] made the multi-party system unnecessary. Since the province was made up primarily of farmers, no interest groups in conflict with the farmers existed in sufficient numbers to demand a voice in the government. Moreover, he argues that the quasi-colonial position of the farming community led to an aversion to the traditional parties of Canada. Farmers viewed the Liberals and the Conservatives as agents of eastern exploitation, and felt that it was necessary to elect a government that was willing to protect and promote the interests of farmers, and hence stand up against the injustices of the federal government. It was in this context, Macpherson holds, that the UFA achieved power.

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[62] Macpherson has been criticized for underestimating the amount of class cleavage that existed in Alberta prior to 1940. For critical discussions of his analysis see: Richards and Pratt (1979, pp.149-53); Peter R. Sinclair (1979); Elton

Macpherson provides a similar analysis of the rise of Social Credit. He shows that when the party was elected in 1935, Alberta was still mainly populated by the petite bourgeoisie, both farmers and small businessmen. The Depression had a sudden and drastic effect on this class, which amplified a pre-existing sense of both material and psychological insecurity. Also, the high level of indebtedness of the farmers made the suggestion of a monetary cure for the Depression exceedingly welcome. These factors, combined with William Aberhart's outstanding organizational abilities, charismatic leadership and identification with fundamentalist religion, he argues, resulted in a Social Credit victory.

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[62] (cont'd)and Goddard (1979, pp.50-51); and Poetschke and McKown (1979).

In sum, Macpherson views the rise of the UFA and Social Credit as the radicalism of a petite bourgeois society struggling to improve its position within a quasi-colonial system. The predominance of the petite bourgeoisie, he claims, created a "society imbued with the independent producer's attitude toward property" (1953, p.x). This, as we shall see below, may have set the stage for the ideological battles that the separatists would engage in during the 1980s.

S.M. Lipset, in *Agrarian Socialism* (1950/1971), provides a class analysis of the Saskatchewan CCF. Throughout the book, Lipset demonstrates that unstable prices for wheat, frequent droughts, and a social structure which was primarily one-class in nature (i.e., made up of petite bourgeois wheat farmers in roughly similar social and economic conditions) generated the formation of the CCF in Saskatchewan. Lipset does not maintain, however, that Saskatchewan society in the 1930s and '40s had a totally monolithic class structure. In fact he goes to great lengths to show that it was primarily wheat farmers, as opposed to livestock producers, mixed-crop farmers, urban businessmen, etc. who provided the impetus and support for the CCF. The reason why wheat farmers were most radical, he suggests, was because as exporters of grain to an unprotected world market in which prices fluctuated unpredictably, they were most vulnerable to changing economic conditions. He writes:

> More than any other group, the wheat farmer is economically naked, completely exposed to the

> vagaries of the price system. There is no doubt that many farmers in other parts of Canada and the world are in a worse financial position, but few experience the chronic alteration between wealth and poverty of the farmers of Saskatchewan. It is possible to adjust to a continuously low income and standard of living, as do many farmers in the Maritime Provinces; for one can plan one's life ahead, make provision for future expenditures, and adjust community instituions to the economic possibilities of an area. The pattern of life of the mixed-crop farmer may be upset by severe depression, but food, clothing, and shelter are secure, and price fluctuations are not so great as in the wheat belt. But it is the "boom and bust" character of wheat production that unhinges life's plans (1950/1971, p.47).

Wheat farmers formed a number of organizations in order to improve their position in the economy. Many of these met with success, including the Territorial Grain Growers' Association (1902), the Grain Growers' Grain Company, the Saskatchewan Cooperative Elevator Company, the Progressive Party, the Farmers' Union, and the United Farmers of Canada. However, as Lipset points out, many of the grievances of the farmers were illogical or based on an incomplete knowledge of a market economy. Farmers tended to focus their attack on 'middlemen' in the economy - the local merchants, the railroads, the Grain Exchange, the banks, etc. They pounced on the elements of the economy to which they were directly exposed, but did not see fit to question the entire capitalist system that governs how such middlemen operate. Consequently, farmers developed false consciousness regarding the conflicting elements in society, and at different times and in varying degrees were hostile towards any form of urban power, be it the banks, big business or even trade unions (Lipset, 1971, p.xxi).[63]

Also, western farmers, like members of other social classes, have suffered disunity arising out of stratification within their class. Wealth, ethnicity, religion and, as suggested above, type of agriculture have all divided farmers. For example, in the Saskatchewan provincial elections from 1934 to 1944, the CCF received less than proportionate support from French, German and Mennonite communities, and more than proportionate support in districts which were predominantly Anglo-Saxon (Sinclair, 1979, p.81).

It is now commonly known that the petite bourgeoisie is no longer the numerically dominant class in the Canadian west. In the words of Peter Sinclair, members of this class are now "transitional marginal remnants of a past era" (1979, p.78). Throughout the western world, urbanization, the growth of multi-national corporations, bureaucratization and a host of additional factors have all but eliminated the petite bourgeoisie. In its place a "new middle class" of urban, white collar, bureaucratized, salaried employees has arisen (Mills, 1951). Mills describes this change in the class structure:

> What happened to the world of the small entrepreneur is best seen by looking at what happened to its heroes: the independent farmers and the small businessmen. These men, the leading actors of the middle class economy of the nineteenth

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[63] A comprehensive criticism of capitalism and support for its abolition formed part of the early platform of the CCF, but members of the party later recognized that this had to be down-played in order to win public support.

> century, are no longer at the center of the American scene; they are merely two layers between other more powerful or more populous strata. Above them are the men of large property, who through money and organization wield much power over other men; alongside and below them are the rank and file of propertyless employees and workers, who work for wages and salaries. Many former entrepreneurs and their children have joined these lower ranks, but only a few have become big entrepreneurs. Those who have persisted as small entrepreneurs are not much like their nineteenth century counterparts, and must now operate in a world no longer organized in their image. (1951, p.13)

Mills suggests that this change in the class structure has left the present petite bourgeoisie in a desperate position. Its diminished population no longer carries much weight at the polls. The ideology of rugged individualism and laissez-faire capitalism that its members commonly espouse is now foreign to most governments and the population at large. The resultant social isolation of the petite bourgeoisie and the near extinction of its mode of production, in addition to the inherent economic vulnerability that this class must endure, has caused members of the petite bourgeoisie to become alienated from contemporary society. Martin Trow argues that

> small businessmen in our society disproportionately tend to develop a generalized hostility toward a complex of symbols and processes bound up with industrial capitalism: the steady growth and concentration of government, labor organizations, and business enterprises; the correlative trend toward greater rationalization of production and distribution; and the men, institutions, and ideas that symbolize these secular trends in modern society (1958, p.275).

Members of the petite bourgeoisie scowl at the thought of government bailouts for large corporations, because they realize that if a small business goes under, as so many do, it will not receive the same treatment. Similarly, if a worker loses his job, he or she can expect government subsidy of one kind or another. Thus the small businessman sees himself as the only risk taker in the economy, and feels he suffers unjustly for it. Government regulation and taxation compound these problems, since they reduce his often meagre earnings and stifle his chances to grow. Not surprisingly, the small enterpriser feels the government is out to get him. Bechhofer and Elliot argue that a major part of the petite bourgeoisie's discontent arises from the feeling that the present state of affairs is not only bad for business, but also fundamentally immoral:

> The complaints [of the petite bourgeoisie] though are not just about the economic effects of all this, but about what they portray as the collapse of a moral order. Increasingly, in the current spate of unrest, one can hear the defense of a moral economy whose practices and institutions are being daily violated. ...Few are really being forced out of business, none are starving but many are aware of widespread changes, social and political, as well as economic, which threaten them (1981, pp.190-91).

Small wonder, then, that members of the petite bourgeoisie join social movements advocating a return to 'free enterprise' and the establishment of a 'moral' society. Sweeny and Schneck (1979) state that, in general, "as the *petite bourgeoisie* declined as a class it found no party no (sic) represent it, became alienated, and joined right-wing extremist movements in disproportionate numbers" (p.265). To illustrate this point, we will now examine several right-wing social movements that have purportedly received petite bourgeois support.

5.1 Petite Bourgeois Support For Right-Wing Movements: Historical Precedents

Writing of the Coughlin movement, Dr. F.W.Townsend's "Old Folks Crusade" and the Huey Long movement, Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr. argues that

> The followers of the demagogues mostly came from the old lower-middle classes, now in an unprecedented stage of frustration and fear, menaced by humiliation, dispossession, and poverty. They came from provincial and traditionally non-political groups in the population, jolted from apathy into near-hysteria by the shock of economic collapse. They came, in the main, from the ranks of the self-employed, who, as farmers or shopkeepers or artisans, felt threatened by organized economic power, whether from above, as in banks and large corporations, or from below, as in trade unions. ...In sum, they seemed to represent Old America in resentful revolt against both contemporary politics and contemporary economics (1960, p.69).

Similar analyses have been made of the rise of Nazism in Germany. Erich Fromm holds that "[i]n contrast to the negative or resigned attitude of the working class and of the liberal and Catholic bourgeoisie, the Nazi ideology was ardently greeted by the lower strata of the middle class, composed of small shopkeepers, artisans, and white-collar workers"[64] (1941, p.211). Rudolf Heberle claims that "the classes particularly susceptible to Nazism were neither the rural nobility and the big farmers nor the rural proletariat, but rather the small farm proprietors, very much the rural eqivalent of the lower middle class or petty bourgeoisie (*Kleinbuergertum*) which formed the backbone of the NSDAP in the cities" (1945, p.112). Richard Grunberger (1971, pp.217-38) makes a similar argument.[65]

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[64] White collar workers are not members of the petite bourgeoisie, and their ideological allignment with this class in Nazi Germany is an anomaly. Trow (1958, pp.279-80) argues that this may have occurred because the large corporations in Germany at this time could not offer white collar employees economic security or social status, unlike contemporary large enterprises.

Similarly, Lipset argues that in France in the 1950s, the right-wing Poujadist movement

> appealed to the petty bourgeoisie, the artisans, merchants, and peasants, inveighing against the dire effects of a modern industrial society on them. It opposed big business, the trusts, the Marxist parties, the trade-unions, department stores and banks, and such state control over business as social security and other welfare state measures which raised the taxes of the little man (1960, pp.157-58).

In the general election in France in 1956, fifty out of the fifty-two Poujadists that were elected were self-employed merchants, artisans or the heads of small businesses (Kornhauser, 1959).

In an empirical study of the social bases of McCarthyism, Martin Trow found that "McCarthy received disproportionately strong support from small businessmen and relatively little support from salaried employees with the same education" (1958, p. 270).[66]

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[65] It is not my contention that the separatist movement is a neo-Nazi movement, but only that the two movements have certain shared characteristics. Both express anti-labor and anti-big business sentiment, and hold the belief that the "common man" is being dominated by both. There are, of course, obvious differences between the two movements.

[66] Several scholars have argued that McCarthyism was also a *regional* movement, getting strong support in the American Midwest. Lipset writes that "[t]he image of the Communist which recurs time and again in [McCarthy's] speeches is one

Lipset argues that there is some evidence that the "old middle class" (which he defines as "the owners of family-owned businesses and self-employed professionals") (1970, p.310) is in a "controlling position in the [John Birch] Society and determines its ideology" (1970, p.310).

Also, in an empirical study concerned with the attitudes of small businessmen (which involved administering a questionnaire to respondents in Wetaskiwin, Alberta), Nolan and Schneck (1969) found statistical support for the hypothesis that small businessmen are more prone to right-wing extremism than are bureaucratic managers.[67]

Thus there is considerable evidence that right-wing movements have received the support of the petite bourgeoisie. We shall now examine the petite bourgeoisie's decline in western Canada, and the political consequences of this.

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[66] (cont'd)of an easterner, usually of Anglo-Saxon Episcopalian origins, who has been educated in schools such as Groton and Harvard" (1955/1963, pp.292-293). Steven Ambrose writes: "There was in McCarthyism an appeal to the inland prejudice against the eastern-seaboard establishment and the things it stood for in the popular mind—the New Deal, among others (1971/1980, p.163). But the regionalism observed may ultimately have had class origins. Lipset asserts that there is a "link between regionalism as an ideology protesting bigness and centralization, and the direct expression of the economic self-interest of the small businessmen...." (1960, p.143).

[67] The authors identified four dimensions of right-wing extremism: political conservatism, political intolerance, authoritarianism and alienation. Scales were devised to measure each dimension; on the conservatism scale, for instance, respondents were asked if they agreed or disagreed with statements such as "Canada would be better off without any labor unions at all".

5.2 The Decline of the Petite Bourgeoisie in Western Canada

It seems that historical circumstances have provided fertile ground for a petite bourgeois movement in western Canada in the early 1980s. As intimated above, the decline of the petite bourgeoisie has occurred relatively recently in western Canada. Table 5.1 shows that in the four western provinces, the self-employed declined from 34.7% of the total labor force in 1941 to 10.7% in 1971. This decline was most marked in Alberta, where this percentage dropped from 40.5% to 10.9%.

Sweeney and Schneck (1979) and others[68] conclude that the change in the class structure in Alberta culminated in the defeat of Social Credit by the provincial Tories in 1971. They write that

> [w]ith the advantage of hindsight, we might speculate that the sudden emergence of Peter Lougheed's new-look Progressive Conservative Party in 1971 is hardly surprising. In terms of the data here, it appears tailor-made to the interests of the new middle class. With a philosophy more tolerant than that of Social Credit, generous welfare services, participation in the private sector of the economy, and pro-western attitudes, all under the comfortably traditional banner of "Conservatism", this party reflects the interests and political ideologies of the new middle class as revealed in this political profile of 1970 (1979, p.268).

To the remaining petite bourgeoisie in Alberta, which was only recently weaned from a provincial government that came to power and ruled the province by virtue of its right-wing populist appeal, the events of the late 1970s and early 1980s must have been traumatic indeed. High interest

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[68] See also Palmer and Palmer (1976); Richards and Pratt (1979, p.166-67); and Foster (1979, Chapter Three).

Table 5.1

Percentage of the Labor Force Self-Employed, 1941 and 1971

	Percent Self-Employed		Percentage Difference
	1941	1971	
British Columbia	21.3	6.3	15.0
Alberta	40.5	10.9	29.6
Saskatchewan	46.7	21.4	25.3
Manitoba	29.9	10.5	19.4
Four Western Provinces, Combined	34.7	10.7	24.0
The Other Provinces of Canada, Combined	20.8	6.6	14.2

Source: 1941 Census of Canada; 1971 Census of Canada.

rates, the slump in the oil industry and other manifestations of the recession were especially hard on small business people, whose economic position is precarious at the best of times. And, as mentioned in Chapter Two, the fact that the recession was preceded by a period of boom likely made matters worse, since the boom probably raised expectations to uncommonly high levels which were never to be fulfilled.

The re-election of the Liberal Party in 1980, which led to the National Energy Program and the new constitution, likely further intensified the petite bourgeoisie's disillusionment. The NEP was fingered out as a socialist policy that was killing the oil industry and having deleterious effects on the economy as a whole, and, to make matters worse, it was seen as draining the west's wealth and prosperity into central Canada. But more important from a theoretical standpoint is what the federal government came to symbolize for members of the petite bourgeoisie – a burgeoning bureaucracy that regulates and taxes at higher and higher levels, propping up large, inefficent enterprises and creating huge state-run companies, while small businesses must suffer the vagaries of the marketplace, heavy taxation and extensive government regulation. The federal government may have been seen as the cause of personal business failure, but, more significantly, it may also have been seen as destroying the way of life of the small entrepreneur by its 'socialist' policies. The days of free-wheeling free enterprise, when a large number of small firms could operate without government intrusion, were over, and there had to be a cause. The federal government was an easy target.

The signing of the constitution may have been viewed as preserving for all time the whole scheme of things that was destroying the the petite bourgeois way of life. The separatists' major criticism of the constitution – that it does not protect property rights – may reflect petite bourgeois insecurity, for if the separatists are correct in their interpretation of the constitution, it leaves unprotected the one element in a small businessperson's life that he is in constant fear of losing, and which distinguishes him from the working class – his petty productive property.

The atypical nature of the oil industry in the west (especially in Alberta) compared to other sectors of the economy may also have been a factor in the ruckus over the NEP and constitution. Stevenson notes that

> Petroleum supports a multitude of small entrepreneurs both directly and indirectly in the service sector of the economy. With its *nouveau riche* mentality, and its congenital suspicion of interventionist central governments, petroleum fits uneasily into the mainstream culture of mature corporate capitalism (1983, p.15).

Members of the petite bourgeoisie likely found themselves without a political party to turn to at both the federal and provincial levels. The 1980 federal election was an indication to them that the west as a whole could not bring about a change in the political climate, even if it united and voted against the government; and it was considered impossible to convince central Canadians that they needed a more right-wing government. Roger Gibbins writes that

> [i]n western Canada people of a similar [conservative] ideological bent have refused to launch a bid for national power, and instead have pursued a geographical short-cut. Their assumption is that central Canadians are so muzzled up to the trough of big government, and so powerful electorally in national politics, that a more ideologically conservative national government is an extremely remote prospect. As Doug Christie, leader of the Western Canada Concept, said in an Edmonton speech, "Eastern Canadians are never going to be productive; they live in a perpetual welfare state" (1981, p.204).

At the provincial level, Lougheed was no longer the great conservative hope, given his association and collaboration with Trudeau on the NEP and the constitution. Policies such as the government ownership of Pacific Western Airlines and the provision of cattle subsidies (which former WCC member Howard Thompson claims helps only the "big" cattle producers), also placed the provincial Tories dangerously left of center. With the disintegration of the Socreds and problems of ideological incompatibility with the NDP, those among the disillusioned right had only themselves to turn to in what they perceived to be a crisis of drastic proportions.

Thus given the change in the class structure in western Canada, the literature on petite bourgois support for right-wing movements in several countries, and the far right-wing tone of the separatist ideology, there is good reason to suspect that the separatist movement receives disproportionate support from the petite bourgeoisie – it seems to offer no special appeal to any other class. It may be that western separatists are comprised of, or at least led by, members of this class who are trying to rescue their disappearing way of life and re-establish their ideology as the dominant ideology of the region. We will now examine the data collected to see if there is any empirical support for the hypothesis that western separatism is a petite bourgeois movement.

5.3 Petite Bourgeois Support For Separatism: Empirical Evidence

An examination of the separatist leadership reveals that, at least at the highest levels, the movement has been directed by members of the petite bourgeoisie. Doug Christie, founder of the WCC, is an independent lawyer. Elmer Knutson, founder of the now defunct West-Fed, is a self-made millionaire who owns several Alberta enterpises. Al Maygard, former WCC party leader, is an independent realtor. Former Alberta WCC strategist and leadership candidate Howard Thompson is a farmer; and ex-Alberta WCC Leader Gordon Kesler owns an oil scouting business. The leader of the Saskatchewan WCC, Ray Bailey, was a farmer until a farming injury prevented him from continuing.[69]

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[69] He is now employed by the provincial government as a driving instructor.

Stated differently, there has never been a WCC or West-Fed leader who was *not* petite bourgeois, with the exception of Ray Bailey, who left this class because of an unfortunate accident.

Another test of petite bourgeois support for separatism was performed by examining the WCC's electoral success in rural ridings. If the party is disproportionately supported by the petite bourgeoisie, one would expect to find its greatest support in rural constituencies since these regions have a high proportion of farmers and small businessmen. Table 5.2 indicates that in the 1982 Alberta provincial election the WCC found its greatest support in rural ridings, if one defines as rural those constituencies outside of the major urban centers of Edmonton, Calgary, Lethbridge, Red Deer, Fort McMurray/Lac La Biche, Grande Prairie, Medicine Hat, Westaskiwin/Leduc and St. Albert. (Using this definition, there are 37 rural ridings in the province, 42 urban.) Of the party's 20 best showings (judged by the percentage of the riding popular vote obtained), 18 are classified as rural according to our definition. Conversely, of the WCC's 20 *worst* showings, 18 are defined as urban; of these 20 worst showings, fifteen were found in Calgary or Edmonton.

A similar trend can be found in the support for the Saskatchewan WCC in the provincial election of 1982. The party's ten best showings were in the following constituencies: Moosomin (15.98% of the riding vote);

TABLE 5.2

Percentage of Constituency Vote Received by the Western Canada Concept In The November 2, 1982 Alberta Provincial Election

Constituency	Percentage of Constituency Popular Vote	Rank Placement in Constituency
1.Cardston	36.67	2
2.Ponoka	33.32	2
3.Wainwright	28.88	2
4.Whitecourt	25.40	2
5.Olds Didsbury	25.03	3
6.Vermilion/ Viking	23.34	2
7.Drumheller	22.10	2
8.Rocky Mountain House	21.70	2
9.Innisfail	21.24	2
10.Peace River	19.91	2
11.Edmonton Sherwood Park	19.74	3
12.Stettler	19.43	2
13.Smoky River	19.35	2
14.Chinook	19.28	2
15.Taber/Warner	18.95	2
16.Highwood	18.00	2
17.Camrose	17.56	3
18.Three Hills	17.42	2
19.Wetaskiwin/ Leduc	17.38	2
20.Drayton Valley	17.27	2
21.Banff/Cochrane	16.58	2
22.Athabasca	16.43	3
23.Lloydminster	16.15	2
24.Lacombe	15.94	2
25.Macleod	15.07	2
26.Spirit River/ Fairview	14.02	3
27.Grande Prairie	13.70	3
28.Stoney Plain	13.69	3
29.Little Bow	13.43	3
30.Edmonton Glenora	13.23	3
31.Redwater/ Andrew	12.90	3
32.Edson	12.21	3
33.Clover Bar	11.72	3
34.Calgary North West	11.31	2
35.Lesser Slave Lake	11.13	3
36.Calgary Glenmore	10.50	2
37.Edmonton Mill Woods	10.48	3
38.St. Albert	10.39	4
39.Calgary Fish Creek	10.34	2
40.Edmonton Avenmore	10.25	3
41.Edmonton Glengarry	10.15	3
42.Calgary Foothills	9.91	3
43.Pincher Creek/ Crowsnest	9.58	3
44.Vegreville	9.56	3
45.Calgary Forest Lawn	9.50	3
46.Cypress	9.11	4
47.Bonnyville	9.02	3
48.Calgary Egmont	8.90	2
49.Lac La Biche/ McMurray	8.56	3
50.Edmonton Jasper Place	8.49	3
51.Calgary Millican	8.47	3
52.Lethbridge East	8.43	3
53.Edmonton Calder	8.36	3
54.Edmonton Belmont	8.21	3
55.Edmonton Meadowlark	8.19	3
56.Calgary Currie	7.94	3
57.Calgary Bow	7.90	3
58.Calgary McKnight	7.87	3
59.Lethbridge West	7.86	3
60.Edmonton Gold Bar	7.82	3
61.Calgary Elbow	7.70	
62.Calgary North Hill	7.69	3
63.Edmonton Highlands	7.64	3
64.Calgary McCall	7.56	3
65.Red Deer	7.55	4
66.Edmonton Centre	7.48	4
67.Calgary West	7.47	3
68.Edmonton Whitemud	6.67	3
69.Barrhead	6.51	3
70.Edmonton Kingsway	6.50	4
71.Calgary Mountain View	6.20	3
72.Calgary Buffalo	6.06	4
73.Edmonton Beverly	6.01	3
74.St. Paul	5.89	3
75.Edmonton Parkallen	5.54	3
76.Medicine Hat	5.53	3
77.Edmonton Norwood	5.42	3
78.Edmonton Strathcona	5.01	3

Source: Province of Alberta, The Report of the Chief Electoral Officer on the 1982 General Election Held Tuesday, November 2, 1982.

Shaunavan (15.16%); Souris-Cannington (14.92%); Morse (12.43%); Maple Creek (10.59%); Prince Albert-Duck Lake (10.45%); Swift Current (8.94%); Rosetown-Elrose (8.37%); Prince Albert (7.94%); and Shellbrook-Torch River (7.93%). The party's ten worst ridings were: Saskatoon South (1.06%); Saskatoon Sutherland (1.31%); Saskatoon University (1.41%); Saskatoon Mayfair (1.58%); Humbolt (1.88%); Regina North West (1.89%); Estevan (1.99%); Saskatoon Fairview (1.99%); Regina North East (2.18%); and Regina Rosemont (2.20%) (Province of Saskatchewan, 1982).

Table 5.3 also indicates that there is greater support for separatism in rural areas. Using the Canada West Foundation sample, which is random for all persons in western Canada living in households containing a telephone, 12.7% of the rural respondents favored separatism, whereas only 7.3% of the non-rural sample were in favor. The support for separatism variable used was derived from a question on the survey that reads:

Would you prefer that the provinces of western Canada:

1. Combine to form an independent country.
2. Join the United States as separate states.
3. Remain a part of Canada.
4. Other[70]

The frequencies obtained for each response were as follows:

1. 63 (4.6%)
2. 36 (2.6%)
3. 1234 (90.3%)
4. 8 (0.6%)

Don't know, no opinion: 25 (1.8%)

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[70] This category presumably includes those who favor a particular province becoming an independent country, the formation of a western Canadian "federation", etc.

TABLE 5.3

Crosstabulation of Response to Separatism Question with Rural/Non-Rural Residency of Respondent*

		Residency of Respondent		
		Rural	Non-Rural	Row Total
Count		17	71	88
Row Percent	Support	19.3	80.7	7.9
Column Percent	Separatism	12.7	7.3	
Total Percent		1.5	6.4	
Count	Do Not	117	902	1019
Row Percent	Support	11.5	88.5	92.1
Column Percent	Separatism	87.3	92.7	
Total Percent		10.6	81.5	
	Column Total	134 12.1	973 87.9	1107 100.0

*"Non-Rural" includes small towns
Chi Square = 3.97 with 1 Degree of Freedom
Significance = 0.05
Source: Canada West Foundation Survey, 1980

Missing cases: 4
N=1366

Those who chose any response other than 3 were coded as being in support of separatism. The rationale for this recoding is that the "support separatism" category includes all those who do not want the west to "remain a part of Canada", even though their preference for an alternative is not the same. The recoding was also necessitated by the relatively low frequency obtained for response 1, which, if treated as a separate category, may not have included enough cases to yeild statistically meaningful results.

It is important to note that Table 5.3 uses a more stringent definition of "rural" than that used in the discussion of Table 5.2. In Table 5.3, persons living in small towns were classifed as "non-rural" along with respondents living major cities. Respondents were asked what the size of their community was, and the responses were originally coded as follows:

1. Rural
2. Less than 2500
3. 2500 to 10,000
4. 10,000 to 100,000
5. Over 100,000

Only those in category 1 are considered "rural" in Table 5.3.

The data cited above appear to support the hypothesis that the separatist movement finds disproportionate strength among the petite bourgeoisie, since the predominance of farming and small businesses in rural regions gives these areas a higher proportion of petite bourgeois residents than that found in urban centers. However, this is only indirect evidence, since we do not know if the greater support for separatism in rural areas is caused by a higher proportion of petite bourgeois residents, or by some other factor. Moreover, we should not conclude that western separatism is strictly a rural movement. Although the data suggest that a greater *proportion* of rural people are separatists, a substantial number of WCC members can be found in cities due to the larger population size of the latter. In Table 5.3, for example, 80.7% of those expressing support for separatism were not resident in areas defined as rural; in the 1982 Alberta election, the WCC got 54,775 (49%) of its 111,131 votes in constituences defined in the discussion of Table 5.2 as urban. The party got 41,073 votes (37% of their provincial total) in Edmonton and Calgary alone.

Another test of petite bourgeois support for separatism was attempted using EAS data. Support for separatism was cross-tabulated with a three category measure of social class, which is shown in Table 5.4. The support for separatism variable was derived from the following question:

Would you favor or not favor the *four* western provinces in Canada leaving Confederation to form an independent country?

Very unfavourable				Very Favourable		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Those who responded with a 5, 6 or 7 were coded as being in support of separatism. In keeping with our previous definition of petite bourgeois (p.100 above), self-employed

TABLE 5.4

Crosstabulation of Response to Separatism Question with Social Class of Respondent, Re-coded

		Social Class of Respondent, Re-coded			
		Not Petite Bourgeois	Petite Bourgeois	Not Working	Row Total
Count	Support Separatism	45	7	1	53
Row Percent		84.9	13.2	1.9	15.2
Column Percent		15.2	24.1	4.5	
Total Percent		12.9	2.0	0.3	
Count	Do Not Support Separatism	252	22	21	295
Row Percent		85.4	7.5	7.1	84.8
Column Percent		84.8	75.9	95.5	
Total Percent		72.4	6.3	6.0	
	Column Total	297	29	22	348
		85.3	8.3	6.3	100.0

Chi Square = 3.73 with 2 Degrees of Freedom
Significance = 0.155
Source: Edmonton Area Study, 1981

people, i.e. small businessmen, independent professionals and so on were classifed as "petite bourgeois"; employees of any kind were categorized as "not petite bourgeois"; and those who were neither, e.g. students, unemployed housewives, pensioners, etc. were classified as "not working". Neither the EAS nor the WAS data were originally coded to distinguish between petite bourgeois and non-petite bourgeois respondents. Access to the uncoded EAS questionnaires allowed the author to construct a new variable that made this distinction.[71] The responses to the following questions were used to ascertain whether the EAS respondents were petite bourgeois or not:

46. What kind of work (do/did) you normally do?
47. What does/did that job involve? (Describe)
48. What kind of place (do/did) you work for?

In 367 out of 400 cases (92% of the total sample) the response to these questions provided enough information to make a petite bourgeois/non-petite bourgeois distinction.

Table 5.4 reveals that 7 of 29 or 24.1% of the petite bourgeois respondents supported separatism, whereas 45 of 252 or only 15.2% of those in the "not-petite bourgeois" category supported separatism. Only 1 (2%) of those "not working" supported separatism. The significance level of .16 indicates that the results shown could be obtained by chance 16 times out of 100, which means that the results are not within acceptable levels of statistical significance. (A significance level of .05 or lower is normally acceptable.) One way analysis of variance was also performed to see if there was a statistically significant difference between the three social class groupings with regard to support for separtism, but the results indicated no significant difference. However, in both cases the results obtained may have been a consequence of having too few petite bourgeois respondents in the sample. (Only 29 respondents or 8.3% of the sample were petite bourgeois.) Nonetheless, the results presented may be taken as clues for further research. Suggestions for further research discussed in the Conclusion below describe a better technique to empirically test the hypothesis.

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[71] This was impossible with the WAS data since the original questionnaires were inaccessible.

On the other hand, another clue that can be gleaned from Table 5.4 is that the separatists may, at least in urban areas, receive the bulk of their support from people outside the petite bourgeoisie. Of the 53 people in support of separatism in Table 5.4, 45 or 85% were not petite bourgeois. The predominance of petite bourgeois leaders at the top levels of the movement suggest that a leader-follower pattern may exist whereby members of the petite bourgeoisie lead those outside this class who share their conservative ideology or sense of regional injustice. Thus another interpretation of the data involves the idea that one need not be petite bourgeois in order to believe in its ideology. Garth Stevenson makes this point, suggesting that although Alberta is no longer a petite bourgeois society, the ideology of this class still has a fairly broad public appeal:

> ...to suppose that these changes [in Alberta's class structure and the province's relationship to central Canada] must produce equally dramatic changes in the politics of Alberta is to fall victim to a rather primitive kind of economic determinism. Ideologically, and therefore politically, Alberta remains the prisoner of its past. The persistence of *petite-bourgeois* attitudes and values is revealed most clearly in the universal obsession with real estate.
>
> ...Both the *petite-bourgeois* and the quasi-colonial aspects of Albertan ideology originated in an agrarian setting, but both are equally compatible with the interests of the established order in a province that has made the transition to a petroleum-based economy. (1983, p.15)

Thus although the separatist ideology would seem to be the battle cry of the remaining petite bourgeoisie in western Canada, it is apparently accepted by a large number of people who are outside this class. This helps to explain why a considerable proportion of those favoring separatism, at least in urban areas, may not be members of the petite bourgeoisie.

In summary, we have seen that a change in the class structure has made the petite bourgeoisie a marginal class in western Canada and elsewhere in the world. This has led to petite bourgeois support for right-wing movements that seek to re-establish the economic philosophy and way of life of this class. The ideology of the separatist movement is quite similar to the ideology normally attributed to the petite bourgeoisie, which suggests that the movemment is disproportionately supported by the small business class.

Several empirical indicators support this hypothesis.

Chapter Six examines a second social group that has become dispossessed in recent decades: Protestant fundamentalists. Like the petite bourgeoisie, fundamentalists have fallen from a position of predominance to one of marginality in recent years, and may be attempting to use the separatist movement to win back their once-powerful position in society.

6. FUNDAMENTALIST SUPPORT FOR SEPARATISM

...the conflict with communism is not one of power blocs but of faiths, part of the unending struggle between God and the devil. The danger of Communism, therefore, is from within - from the corrosion of faith by insidious doctrines. That is to say, by "collectivism" - the modern fundamentalist's secular counterpart of atheism. David Danzig (1962)

There is reason to suspect that the separatist movement appeals to Protestant fundamentalists. The only official pronouncement that the WCC has made with regard to religion is its acknowledgement of "God as the supreme power", but there are other indications that the party attracts fundamentalists. Former Alberta WCC leader Gordon Kesler, a Mormon, has stated: "Religion determines your values and that's especially true for me. Once you have those values, you project them into other aspects of your life, which for me, right now, has to be in the political realm" (*Edmonton Journal*, September 4, 1982, p.D9). Six of the twenty-four directors of the WCC prior to the July, 1982 convention were Mormons (*Maclean's*, July 26, 1982, p.9). Other party supporters having fundamentalist connections include Howard Thompson, who has done missionary work for the Church of the Nazarene, and Jake Johnson, a Baptist minister who ran for the WCC in the 1982 Alberta election.

It may be the case that the party's staunch anti-'socialist' position has been influenced by members' fundamentalist beliefs. For instance, the WCC's work-for-welfare scheme, which as we saw in Chapter Four was offical party policy long before the Tories adopted it, may have fundamentalist underpinnings. Roy Evanson, a Mormon from Taber, Alberta, who lobbied the provincial government twice during the 1970s in an effort to get the plan implemented, claims that God meant man to be productive and that no one should get something for nothing (*Edmonton Journal*, October 20, 1982, p.1). Richard Hofstadter (1965) argues that some fundamentalists believe that the economic realm is a "moral testing ground" where virtue and hard work are rewarded with riches, and indolence with poverty (pp.81-82). Some fundamentalists believe that the economic system is inherently just, and that therefore it should not be tampered with. Hofstadter observes that

> the modern economy, based on advertising, lavish consumption, installment buying, safeguards to social security, relief to the indigent, government fiscal manipulation, and unbalanced budgets, seems reckless and immoral [to fundamentalists], even when it happens to work. In the intellectual synthesis of contemporary ultra-conservatism, the impulses of Protestant asceticism can thus be drawn upon to support business self-interest and the beautiful mathematical models of neo-classical economists (1965, pp.81-82).

Also relevant in this regard is the fundamentalist's religious dogmatism. David Danzig (1962) argues that this is carried over into economic affairs. He states that

> [o]n religious questions, [fundamentalism] takes a stand against any attempts at revisionism and modernism. This emphasis upon literalness and purity of doctrine makes the fundamentalist look upon pragmatism in the social world with the same suspiciousness and distaste with which he views

revisionism in religious doctrine (1962, p.292).
Thus if a fundamentalist believes no one should get "something for nothing", for example, no exceptions are possible.

Fundamentalists' anti-socialism may also have developed from their belief that the world's population can be divided into the saved and the damned, and that history is a battle between the forces of good and the forces of evil. Hence government intervention in the economy may not only be viewed as bad economic policy, it may be viewed as *evil* perpetrated by *evil persons.* This idea is reflected in Jake Johnson's comment that "the Bible teaches free enterprise", and that the antithesis of free enterprise is socialism, which is what Messrs. Lougheed and Trudeau are leading Canada into (Author's conversation with Mr. Johnson, 1983). The 'good versus evil' idea may also help to explain the separatists' use of conspiracy theory. That is, if a person is free to act in either a good or and evil manner in a social order that is inherently just, and if history is a struggle between good and evil, then where social ills occur, collusion by people of evil intent can be the only explanation (Lipset, 1970, pp.13-14).

There are also historical reasons why fundamentalists may be attracted to the separatist movement. Like the petite bourgeoisie, fundamentalism in the west has sunk from a position of predominance to one of marginality. Alberta, for instance, has had a long tradition of fundamentalist preaching by *government* members that began with William Aberhart in the 1930s and which was continued by Earnest Manning up until 1968.[72] However, fundamentalism has now lost its popular appeal. Several observers of Alberta politics have argued that Social Credit's association with fundamentalist religion was a factor in its downfall. Pratt and Richards, for example,[73] write:

> The new middle class was urban and secular in its outlook and impatient with Social Credit's blend of religious fundamentalism and the remnants of its agrarian populist past. Social Credit, the Lougheed Conservatives were fond of saying, had grown isolationist and was outside the mainstream of North American culture, something which could never be said of Peter Lougheed. While the pious Manning was still delivering his weekly radio Back to the Bible Hour sermons ("in any unregenerate society, the will of the people is bound to come into conflict with the will of God" was the somewhat ominous theme of a typical 1966 broadcast), Lougheed was thumbing the pages of Theodore White's *The Making of the President 1960* and sharpening his television image in the Kennedy mould....(1979, pp.166-67)

Thus it may be the case that the separatist movement is seen by some fundamentalists as the means by which they can reinstate their values as the ruling ideas of the region. At present fundamentalist beliefs are by and large extrinsic to most governments and the population at large, which not only creates moral indignation on the part of fundamentalists, but also a sense of status deprivation.

However, in considering fundamentalist support for right-wing movements, we must not ignore the many instances of fundamentalist support for left-wing causes. For instance, in Canada and other countries the reformist 'social gospel' movement, which was prominent in North America from the 1890s to the 1930s, was spearheaded by fundamentalist ministers.[74] The early CCF also had fundamentalist leaders – J.S. Woodsworth was a Methodist minister and Tommy Douglas a Baptist preacher. Thus we must not assume that fundamentalism necessarily predisposes one to support right-wing movements such as the separatist movement.

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[72] The two Socred leaders that followed Manning, Harry Strom and Werner Schmidt, were both fundamentalists (Palmer and Palmer, 1976).

[73] See also Palmer and Palmer (1976) and Foster (1979, Chapter Three).

We will now examine other studies that have attempted to determine if fundamentalists have supported right-wing movements, and discuss the empirical data available on fundamentalist support for separatism.

6.1 Fundamentalist Support For Separatism: Empirical Evidence

Previous research on the religious affiliation of members of right-wing movements do *not* show a clear pattern of fundamentalist support. Lipset (1970, pp.297-300) found that as a whole, fundamentalists are underrepresented in the John Birch Society (although Society founder Robert Welch is a fundamentalist, as was the society's martyr, John Birch), yet reports that other right-wing movements such as the Portland Freedom Center have heavy fundamentalist representation.

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[74] See Allen (1973).

Bob Altemeyer (1981, p.240) found that people with no religious affiliation (e.g. atheists, agnostics) generally score lower on right-wing authoritarianism scales than those naming a religious affiliation. Jews, he states, score lower than Protestants and Catholics. In his American sample, Protestants scored higher than Catholics, but in his Manitoba sample, Protestants and Catholics did not differ significantly. In Manitoba, among Protestant denominations fundamentalists scored higher than Anglicans and United Church members, whereas his American sample showed little difference between Protestant denominations.

The EAS/WAS data on the religious preference of those supporting separatism indicate no significant relationship between fundamentalism and support for separatism. (The Canada West Foundation survey does not include a religious preference variable.) Crosstabulations of support for separatism with the respondents' religious preference, re-coded into "Non-fundamentalist Christian", "Fundamentalist Christian" and "Other" categories, showed no significant relationship between the two variables. One-way analysis of variance also failed to yield significant results. However, the small number of fundamentalists in the sample (24 or 7.3% of the total) may have biased the results. A sample containing more fundamentalists would permit a more accurate test our hypothesis. Suggestions for further research are given in Chapter Seven which outline more suitable empirical methods that could be used in future studies. Nonetheless, we must conclude that the data showed no significant relationship between fundamentalism and support for separatism.

Lipset (1970, p.302), following Pheneger (1966), argues that the lack of solid fundamentalist support for right-wing movements indicates that two separate movements, namely fundamentalist revivalism and secular economic rightism, sometimes mesh with one another, but at other times are independent. In western Canada today people like Gordon Kesler and Jake Johnson seem to represent both trends, but to equate western separatism with fundamentalist revivalism would be to ignore the larger issues discussed in chapters Two through Five. Johnson's statement that the movement "is not a religious movement at all" (Author's conversation with Mr. Johnson, 1983) supports this interpretation.

Also, it may be the case that fundamentalism itself does not lead to support for separatism. Fundamentalism is the religion of the frontier, which as we saw in previous chapters was populated primarily by members of the petite bourgeoisie. Thus it may be that many of the presently dispossessed petite bourgeoisie also happen to be fundamentalists, and that their support for separatism stems from class and regional grievances, not from fundamentalist beliefs. These issues can only be resolved with further research.

The next chapter concludes our study of western separatism. In it the main arguments and findings of the study are summarized, and suggestions for further research are presented.

7. CONCLUSION

We have seen that the western separatist movement grew out of three crises that occurred in 1980: the federal election, the patriation and amendment of the Canadian constitution, and the implementation of the National Energy Program. These three events convinced literally thousands of western Canadians that the west should leave Confederation. The election, which left all but two western MPs in the opposition, was seen as proof that the west is impotent in national politics and that political influence in Canada is the prerogative of Ontario and Quebec. Opposition to the new constitution was proclaimed on the grounds that it was being imposed unilaterally by a government that had little support in the west. It was also feared that the new constitution would preserve the west's subservient position in Confederation, and deny citizens property rights. The NEP was viewed as a stark example of how central Canada uses its political strength to exploit the resources of the west for its own purposes. It was also held to be nothing short of an economic disaster for the oil industry in Alberta. Moreover, the fervent reaction to these developments was likely exacerbated by high boom-time expectations that were never fulfilled due the recession of the 1980s.

The separatist movement set out to convince western Canadians that the west is politically and economically dominated by central Canada, and that independence would solve this problem. However, members' pronouncements made it quite clear that the movement is concerned with far more than regional grievances. The claim that central Canada exploits western resources, for example, was often accompanied with the assertion that Prime Minister Trudeau is planning to establish a socialist dictatorship in Canada. A review of the separatist ideology showed that the movement favors a fundamental re-structuring of western Canadian society – members advocate a return to laissez-faire capitalism and conservative religio-moral philosophy. Thus the separatist movement combines a sense of regional injustice with ultra-conservatism.

The regional basis of the movement was outlined in a discussion of three macro-theoretical perspectives which illustrated the west's position in Confederation. A review of the frontier thesis showed how geographical isolation from the seat of power and a frontierist spirit of independence has influenced the separatist movement. Staple theory was discussed to demonstrate the west's dependence on export staples, and to show how western separatism is, in part, an attempt to capture as much economic rent as possible from staple production. The separatists' general claim that the west is politically and economically exploited by central Canada was examined in a discussion of the metropolis-hinterland perspective.

The ultra-conservative thrust of the movement relates to members' regional grievances in that the federal government is seen as imposing a way of life on the region that members strongly oppose. Thus not only is western wealth being drained out of the region, 'socialism' is being forced on the west. This perception indicates that the separatists are not only dissatisfied with the west's role in Confederation; they are also alienated from contemporary Canadian society as a whole. In fact their alienation exaggerates their feeling of regional injustice, since they believe the west's weakness in national affairs permits the destruction of their conservative way of life. Hence for the separatists, the regional imbalance of power is a critical concern. It was argued that western separatism is primarily an ultra-conservative movement, since the major goal of the separatists is the creation of a more conservative social order. Independence without a shift to the right in the new country would not satisfy the separatists.

With the premise that western separatism is essentially an ultra-conservative movement, an attempt was made to identify the social bases of the movement. It was hypothesized that the petite bourgeoisie disproportionately supports separatism, since the ideology normally attributed to this class matches quite closely that of the separatists. It was also revealed that right-wing movements in several countries have been supported by the petite bourgeoisie, and that there are historical reasons why the petite bourgeoisie would support an ultra-conservative movement in western Canada in the 1980s. With regard to the latter, it was shown that in recent decades the petite bourgeoisie dropped from a position of numerical and political prominence to one of marginality. It was argued that members of the petite bourgeoisie are attempting to use the separatist movement to regain their former position in society, and re-establish their ideology as the dominant ideology of the region.

Several indicators of petite bourgeois support for separatism were found. Virtually all current and former WCC party Leaders are petite bourgeois, as is the former West-Fed Leader. An analysis of the 1982 provincial elections in Alberta and Saskatchewan revealed that the WCC received its greatest support in rural constituencies, which may be an indication of petite bourgeois support for separatism since rural regions contain a high proportion of farmers and small businessmen. The Canada West Foundation survey showed that rural respondents had higher proportionate support for separatism than non-rural respondents, which also suggests disproportionate petite bourgeois support. Significant results were not obtained when petite bourgeois support for separatism was tested using EAS data, but this may have resulted from an inadequate number of petite bourgeois respondents in the sample. The optimal way to test the hypothesis would be to do a class breakdown of a random sample of WCC members. However, the controversial nature of the movement makes it difficult to do this. Members are quite reluctant to divulge any information about themselves.[75] Another way to test the hypothesis would be to select a sample comprised of a sufficient number of petite bourgeois and "not petite bourgeois" respondents. A regression equation would then be devised which would reveal the effect that the petite bourgeois variable has on the support for separatism variable, while controlling for other relevant variables.

The final hypothesis linked western separatism with Protestant fundamentalism. Three considerations led to the formulation of this hypothesis. Firstly, other right-wing movements have received fundamentalist support. Secondly, there are historical reasons why fundamentalists would support an ultra-conservative movement, especially in Alberta. Like the petite bourgeoisie, fundamentalism is no longer a powerful force in the west. Hence some fundamentalists may be using the separatist movement in an attempt to bring religion and conservative morality back into politics. The final consideration involved the fact that several prominent WCCers are fundamentalists.

The EAS/WAS data failed to support the hypothesis, but the sample included only a small number of fundamentalists. Better empirical tests of fundamentalist support for separatism would be similar to those suggested above to test petite bourgeois support. A breakdown of a random sample of

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[75] The author tried on several occasions to get access to WCC membership lists, but was repeatedly denied permission. WCC officials were also reluctant to distribute a questionnaire that I had prepared.

WCC members by religious affiliation would best test the hypothesis. A second technique would involve selecting a sample containing a sufficient number of fundamentalists and "non-fundamentalists". A regression equation would indicate the effect that the fundamentalist variable has on the support for separatism variable.

Further research into the social bases of ultra-conservatism in general would benefit our understanding of western separatism considerably. An examination of how the decline of the petite bourgeoisie throughout the western world has affected local social movements would also be instuctive.

In conclusion, this study has exposed some of the factors underlying the origins and development of the western separatist movement, and in doing so has laid the groundwork for further research.

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9. APPENDIX

9.1 The 1981 Edmonton/Winnipeg Area Study (EAS/WAS)

The EAS/WAS is conducted yearly by the Departments of Sociology at the University of Alberta and the University of Manitoba. Identical surveys are conducted in both Edmonton and Winnipeg, which allows inter-city comparisons to be made. The survey contains a wide variety of questions on a number of issues, since any member of the two sociology departments or student therein may submit questions to be placed on it.

The sample size for the EAS is 400, for the WAS, 336. The samples were selected at random from the respective 1980 civic censi. The surveys were conducted in the respondent's home by trained personnel.

The data were gathered in February and March of 1981. At the time the survey was taken, the NEP had been introduced (but Lougheed and Trudeau's re-negotiation of it had not taken place), the constitutional agreement between Ottawa and the provinces had not been reached, and the Olds-Didsbury by-election was not to occur for another year.

9.2 The Canada West Foundation Survey

The Canada West Foundation is a non-profit organization that conducts research into the west's position in Confederation. It receives funding from all four western provincial governments, as well as from some western

Canadian based companies.

The sampling and fieldwork for this public opinion poll was done by Market Information Research Limited, a privately owned and operated research company. The interviews were conducted between October 18 and October 28, 1980, which places the survey after the February, 1980 federal election and after the October 2, 1980 announcement by Prime Minister Trudeau that his goverment would proceed with unilateral patriation and amendment of the constitution. The poll was taken just before the October 28, 1980 introduction of the NEP, and before the separatist movement's huge public rallies took place (such as the November 20, 1980 rally at Edmonton's Jubilee Auditorium). It should also be noted that the survey pre-dates the Olds-Didsbury by-election by about a year and a half.

The interviews were conducted by telephone and took about fifteen minutes to complete. A random sample of households containing telephones was drawn from each of the four western provinces. Saskatchewan and Manitoba were originally oversampled in order to provide enough cases for significant inter-provincial comparisons. To correct this, 60 cases from Saskatchewan and 80 from Manitoba were randomly deleted. An individual from each household was randomly predetermined to ensure that every person eighteen years or older living in the household had an equal chance of appearing in the sample. Up to four attempts were made to reach the individual randomly selected. Hence the sample is representative of all persons in western Canada living in households containing a telephone. The sample size is 1230.

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THE WESTERN SEPARATIST MOVEMENT: ULTRA-CONSERVATISM IN THE WESTERN HINTERLAND

by

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A THESIS
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Abstract

This thesis provides a sociological analysis of the western separatist movement. It is argued that western separatism is primarily an ultra-conservative movement, as opposed to a movement seeking to redress strictly regional grievances. Regional factors are seen as relevant to the movement, but the creation of a conservative social order is presented as the main goal of the separatists. Given this premise, an attempt is made to ascertain the social bases of the movement. It is hypothesized that the petite bourgeoisie disproportionately supports separatism; empirical evidence is provided that supports this hypothesis. The final hypothesis holds that Protestant fundamentalists disproportionately support the movement, but this could not be adequately tested with the data available.

Acknowledgements

Several people have contributed to the writing of this thesis. I would like to thank my advisor, Professor Graham Lowe, for suggesting that I write on western separatism, and for providing constructive input into this study for over two years. I am also grateful to the other members of my committee, Professors A.K. Davis and and Douglas Owram, for their helpful comments and suggestions.

The Edmonton office of the Western Canada Concept welcomed my inquiry into the party, and furnished me with a tremendous amount of documentation and general information. Al Maygard, Keltie Zubko and Mrs. Brenda Parkes were very helpful in this regard. It is especially appreciated that I was allowed to attend and record party meetings.

A special thanks goes to Professor Richard Ogmundson, whose inspirational teaching introduced me to the study of political sociology.

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It is rare for a mass movement to be wholly of one character. Usually it displays some facets of other types of movement, and sometimes it is two or three movements in one.
Eric Hoffer, *The True Believer*

1. INTRODUCTION

National unity has been an issue in Canada throughout her history. Our Native peoples have suffered an epoch of defeat and destitution that continues to cause unrest. For over two hundred years Quebec nationalism has simmered and at various times exploded. In the maritimes, dissatisfaction with the terms of Confederation brought threats of separation in the nineteenth century and a sense of injustice in the twentieth. In western Canada there has been a history of conflict that began with Riel, and which later took the form of protest movements led by such parties as the Progressives, the CCF, Social Credit and others. The latest manifestation of national tension came on the scene in 1980 – western separatism.

The western separatist movement differs from all previous western Canadian political movements in one fundamental respect: it advocates independence for western Canada.[1] Previous movements strove for change, but the change they desired was to be brought about *within* Confederation. Thus the separatist movement is not another western protest movement as such, but rather one that favors a radical alteration of the political status quo. It is this fact, more than any other, that has brought the movement the publicity that it has received. And it is this aspect of the movement, along with the support that it has earned, that makes western separatism worthy of academic attention. Research into the movement, however, has thus far been minimal. Apart from Pratt and Stevenson's *Western Separatism* (1981), I know of no academic material whatever on the topic.[2]

---

[1] The movement's position on independence changed as the movement evolved. Initially, the Western Canada Concept was unequivocally separatist, but changes in the party's leadership and the practicalities of fighting provincial elections softened the WCC's stand on separation. West-Fed, an organization that was ostensibly separatist but which is no longer active, was ambiguous in its position on western independence. These issues are explored in detail below.

The purpose of this study is to expose the social factors underlying the separatist movement. The research was conducted at two levels of analysis. The first is the macro or regional level, where the separatist movement is analyzed as a hinterland revolt. Here the analysis proceeds deductively, drawing on an extensive body of theoretical literature in order to elucidate the regional grievances that have contributed to origins and development of the movement. The frontier thesis, staple theory and the metropolis-hinterland perspective are discussed in this regard.[3]

The second level of analysis is pursued at the *intra*-regional level. At this level an attempt is made to identify the social groups within western Canada that support the separatist movement. Here the research was conducted inductively; it involved an in-depth examination of the separatist movement that was unencumbered by apriori theoretical considerations. In order to observe the movement directly, I signed up as a member of the Western Canada Concept. This kept me informed as to meeting dates, party literature available, etc. Living in Edmonton allowed me to attend virtually every separatist rally held in the city since the fall of 1980, and gave me the opportunity to sit in on a large number of informal separatist meetings and gatherings. At all party functions I identified myself as a student studying western separatism; I stated that my purpose was to learn about the movement but not to participate in it. For the approximately eighteen months that I maintained close contacts with the WCC, I enjoyed a warm rapport with party members and received a surprising degree of cooperation from them. My notes and tape recordings provided rich documentary material for the study.

---

[2] The notion of an independent west has not escaped the imagination of fiction writers, however. At least two novels have been published recently depicting popular western separatist movements: *Separation Two*, by Richard Rohmer (1981), and *Alberta Alone*, by John Ballem (1976).

[3] A more extensive summary of the use of these three theoretical perspectives in this study is given in the "Chapter Outlines" section of the Introduction, pp.13-14.

Three data sets were used to test the hypotheses generated in this study. The first is a public opinion poll conducted by the Canada West Foundation in October, 1980. The other two are the 1981 Edmonton Area Study (EAS) and the 1981 Winnipeg Area Study (WAS).[4] The latter two data sets were compiled from identical surveys administered in Edmonton and Winnipeg; the surveys were conducted by the Departments of Sociology at the University of Alberta and the University of Manitoba. None of the three data sets were originally designed to test the hypotheses generated in this study. Some hypotheses could not be tested at all with the data, others somewhat inadequately. The surveys were used, however, because no other data sets were available that contain questions on western separatism.

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[4] See the Appendix for a discussion of these three data sources.

The central hypothesis of this paper is that western separatism is first and foremost an *ultra-conservative* movement, as opposed to a movement seeking to redress *regional* grievances. (Throughout this thesis the term 'conservative' is used to denote American-style conservatism, which holds that individual freedom must be protected against encroachment by the state. It is not used to refer to the British and Canadian conservative tradition, in which the state is considered to be the protector of society, and therefore a legitimate participant in civil affairs.) There *are* elements of a hinterland revolt in western separatism, but the chief grievance of the separatists seems to be that the federal and provincial governments are too left-wing. Trudeau and Lougheed, for example, are considered socialists by western separatists, and are seen as destroying free enterprise and individual liberty in Canada. The only way out of this dilemma, separatists contend, is western independence, which they claim would bring about a more conservative social order. Thus I argue that the separatists view western independence as primarily the means by which they can create a conservative society. Independence without an ideological shift to the right in the new country, it seems, would be a hollow victory for the separatists. Former Alberta WCC Leader, Gordon Kesler, has admitted that "independence is not an end – its a means to an end" (WCC rally, Edmonton, September 21, 1982). The evidence for this hypothesis comes primarily from the separatists' ideology, which is unmistakably that of the far right.

Given the hypothesis that western separatism is primarily an ultra-conservative movement, an attempt was made to discover what social groups in western Canada would support this type of movement. With regard to social class, a review of the literature on right-wing movements revealed that many of these movements receive disproportionate support from the petite bourgeoisie. 'Petite bourgeoisie' is defined as the social class comprised of independent professionals, small businessmen, independent farmers and other *self-employed* individuals who themselves employ few or no workers. Several students of right-wing movements assert that petite bourgeois support for such movements can ultimately be attributed to the decline in the size of this class relative to other classes. They contend that the development of mature corporate capitalism, in conjunction with increasing government involvement in the economy, has squeezed out small enterprises and replaced them with huge corporations. Concomitant with this process has been the popularization of the 'welfare state' ideology, which is contrary to the petite bourgeois belief in laissez-faire capitalism and rugged individualism.[5] Thus the change in the class structure has caused the petite bourgeoisie to become a marginal class both politically and ideologically – its reduced size has made it a weak force at the polls, and its ideas are now at odds with those of most governments and the population at large.[6] This dispossession, as well as the economic insecurity that members of this class must endure, is believed to have resulted in petite bourgeois support for ultra-conservative movements that endeavor to bring back the bygone petite bourgeois way of life and system of ideas.

The above analysis of the petite bourgeoisie's predicament gave rise to the second hypothesis of this study, which is that the separatist movement receives more than proportionate support from members of this class. This hypothesis gains credence if we consider that the petite bourgeoisie was once a dominant class in western Canada, and that it has only recently been displaced by an expanding middle class. Several observers of the politics of Alberta have argued that this change in the class structure has had an effect on political behavior in the province. Richards and Pratt (1979, pp.166-67) and others[7] argue that the expansion of the 'new middle class' was a major factor in the victory of the Lougheed Conservatives in 1971. The ousted Social Credit government had relied heavily on the farmer and small business class for its support, which by 1971 had shrunk to the point where it represented only a small proportion of the provincial population. Thus it may be that members of the once-powerful petite bourgeoisie are, through the separatist movement, attempting to regain government power, rescue their vanishing way of life and re-establish their ideology as the dominant ideology of the region.

---

[5] Members of the petite bourgeoisie and others who advocate laissez-faire capitalism often contradict this ideology by demanding government subsidies or by forming organizations designed to minimize their economic vulnerability. Examples of the latter include chambers of commerce and wheat pools. Instances of such contradictions among separatists are discussed in Chapter Four, p.94.

[6] The separatist movement originated at a time when a shift to the right in political philosophy appeared to be taking place in the western world. The origins of the movement pre-date the election of Ronald Regan by six months; the movement also arrived before major NDP defeats Saskatchewan and British Columbia. Even the federal Liberal Party has taken an increasingly pro-business posture recently, as evidenced by Marc Lalonde's 1983 budget. Thus it may be that governments and the population at large are more in step with the traditional petite bourgeois ideology today than they were when the separatist movement began in 1980.

Several tests of petite bourgeois support for separatism were carried out. An examination of the WCC and West-Fed leadership revealed that all current and former WCC Party Leaders are petite bourgeois, and that the former West-Fed Leader is petite bourgeois.[8] Another test, which involved an analysis of the 1982 Saskatchewan and Alberta general elections, showed that the WCC received its greatest support in rural constituencies. This may be an indication that the petite bourgeoisie disproportionately supports the WCC since a large proportion of rural residents are farmers or small businessmen. A rural/non-rural dichotomization of respondents on the Canada West Foundation survey showed that a greater proportion of rural respondents were in favor of separation than non-rural respondents, which again may be an indication of petite bourgeois support for separatism.

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[7] See also Sweeney and Schneck (1979); Palmer and Palmer (1976); and Foster (1979).

[8] The party Leaders referred to here are: Doug Christie, the former 'national' WCC Leader, who is currently the B.C. WCC Leader; Al Maygard, former Alberta WCC Leader; Gordon Kesler, former Alberta WCC Leader; Ray Bailey, Saskatchewan WCC Leader; and Elmer Knutson, former West-Fed Leader.

The EAS/WAS data on occupations were not originally coded to distinguish between petite bourgeois and non-petite bourgeois respondents, but access to the uncoded Edmonton surveys enabled the author to create a variable on the EAS that made this distinction.[9] The EAS data showed petite bourgeois respondents as having greater proportionate support for separatism than non-petite bourgeois respondents, but the significance level attained was not within statistically acceptable limits. However, the lack of statistical significance may have resulted from an insufficient number of petite bourgeois respondents in the sample. Suggestions for further research discussed in Chapter Seven outline some methodological procedures that would eliminate this problem in future studies.

A third hypothesis was developed regarding the religious affiliation of those supporting western separatism. Although the relationship between religion and politics is complex, there was sufficient evidence to pursue the hypothesis that Protestant fundamentalists disproportionately support western separatism. This idea was partially derived from an examination of the literature on American right-wing movements, which indicates that several U.S. conservative movements are supported by Protestant fundamentalists. A comtemporary instance of this is the Moral Majority movement led by Baptist minister Jerry Falwell. Another reason to suspect that fundamentalists support the separatist movement arises from the fact that former Alberta WCC Leader Gordon Kesler is a Mormon, and that six of the twenty-four directors of the WCC prior to the July, 1982 party convention were Mormons (*Maclean's*, July 26, 1982, p.9).[10] Another bit of evidence is that a Baptist minister, Jake Johnson, ran for the WCC in the 1982 Alberta general election.[11]

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[9] See p.126 for a discussion of how this was done. The Canada West Foundation survey does not include a petite bourgeois/non-petite bourgeois variable either, and could not be re-coded to create such a variable. A petite bourgeois/non-petite bourgeois variable could not be created with the WAS data because the uncoded surveys for this study were inaccessible.

There are also historical reasons why fundamentalists may be attracted to the separatist movement, especially in Alberta. For decades, the Social Credit Party governed the province with an agrarian, fundamentalist public image, but in recent years both fundamentalism and Social Credit have lost their popular appeal. It has been argued by Richards and Pratt (1979, pp.166-67) and Palmer and Palmer (1976) that Social Credit's identification with fundamentalist religion was a factor in the party's downfall in 1971. Thus some fundamentalists may view the separatist movement as a way to restore their religion and conservative morality to its once-prominent position in provincial politics.

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[10] In my interaction with WCC members, I got the impression that some non-Mormon WCCers resented the Mormon presence in the party. Thus the WCC is by no means united by common religious convictions.

[11] Mr. Johnson ran in the Edmonton Avonmore riding. He was a candidate for the Social Credit Party in 1975.

As previously suggested, the EAS/WAS was not constructed to test fundamentalist support for separatism. The survey does, however, include a religious preference variable.[12] A re-coding of this variable into "fundamentalist", "non-fundamentalist Christian" and "other" categories was performed, but the data indicated no significant relationship between support for separatism and the respondents' religious preference re-coded in this manner. However, this may have resulted from an inadequate number of fundamentalists in the sample. Suggestions for further research are given in Chapter Seven which would eliminate this methodological problem.

In summary, this study uses three macro-theoretical perspectives - the frontier thesis, staple theory and the metropolis-hinterland perspective - to illustrate how the west's position as a hinterland of central Canada has contributed to the origins and development of the western separatist movement. A direct observation of the movement, however, led to the idea that although regional grievances are relevant to the movement, the creation of a more conservative society is the ultimate aim of the separatists.

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[12] The Canada West Foundation survey does not include a religious preference variable.

The conservative thrust of the movement ties in with the west's hinterland status in that some groups in the west believe that the federal government is not only exploiting the region, but also destroying their way of life. Since the west is powerless to change the government, they reason, independence is the only way to stop this process. Given this situation, an attempt was made to determine which groups in western Canada favor the creation of the conservative society that the separatists advocate. The second hypothesis of the study suggests that western separatism receives disproportionate support from the petite bourgeoisie, and that therefore the movement is to some extent a petite bourgeois revolt. Some empirical evidence was obtained that supports this hypothesis. A third hypothesis links western separatism with Protestant fundamentalism, but the data available fail to indicate a significant relationship between these two variables.

We now turn to the chapter outlines, which briefly describe the content of the next six chapters.

1.1 Chapter Outlines

In order to understand a social movement, the immediate issues that surrounded its origins and development must be taken into consideration. To this end, Chapter Two discusses three crises that occured in 1980 that precipitated the separatist movement. The first was the near shut-out in the west of the victorious Liberal Party in the federal election of that year. Westerners unequivocally rejected the Liberals in 1980 – only two of the west's seventy-seven constituencies elected Liberal candidates – but this did not prevent the party from forming a majority government. It did have the effect, however, of convincing many westerners that the region is impotent in national politics. Two rival separatist organizations, West-Fed and what later became the Western Canada Concept, sprang to life within days of the election.

Eight months later, in October, 1980, the second crisis began when Prime Minister Trudeau announced that his government was prepared to unilaterally patriate and ammend the Canadian constitution. The third crisis developed later that month when the federal government announced its plans to implement a new energy strategy via the National Energy Program. Within weeks of these two developments, huge rallies were held where organizers preached western independence to highly receptive audiences.

In addition to discussing these three crises, Chapter Two outlines how the separatist movement progressed from its initial 'active' phase,[13] which was characterized by large, emotional rallies, to an institutionalized stage. The institutionalization of the movement involved the WCC becoming an organized political party, which fought and won a by-election at Olds-Didsbury in 1981.

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[13] This term is taken for Hoffer (1951), whose work is discussed in Chapter Two.

Chapter Two concludes with a brief examination of how dashed expectations caused by the recession may have influenced the separatist movement. The theory of rising expectations is discussed in this regard to illustrate the potentially explosive scenario in which high boom-time expectations are met with declining objective conditions. The discussion of the theory of rising expectations brings the analysis, albeit briefly, to the social-psychological level, but this step is justified insofar as it helps us come to terms with the impassioned reaction to the three crises discussed earlier in the chapter.

In Chapter Three the three macro-theoretical perspectives are discussed to show how western separatism is, in part, a movement seeking to make amends for the grievances of a hinterland region. The first theoretical perspective discussed, the frontier thesis, illustrates how physical remoteness from the seat of power and a frontier-generated spirit of independence may have influenced the separatist movement. Following this, a discussion of staple theory shows how the west's dependence on export staples has historically and presently left the region economically vulnerable. Alberta's disputes with Ottawa over oil pricing and revenue sharing that occurred in 1980 and 1981, as well as the separatists' response to this issue, are examined in the context of staple theory. The metropolis-hinterland perspective is the final theoretical orientation presented in Chapter Three. It is discussed in conjunction with the contention made by separatists that the west is economically and politically exploited by central Canada.

Chapter Four introduces the central hypothesis of the study, which suggests that there is more at play in western separatism than an attempt to redress regional inequities. The 'other side' of separatism is exposed here, i.e. the extremely right-wing social and economic policies that the separatists advocate. On the basis of the emphasis given these policies in the movement, the argument is made that separatism is first and foremost an *ultra-conservative* movement.

Chapter Five examines the hypothesis that the separatist movement is disproportionately supported by the petite bourgeoisie. The decline of this class relative to other classes in the west is documented in this chapter, as is its political and ideological dispossession. Examples are given of other right-wing movements that have been supported by the petite bourgeoisie, and the various empirical tests of the hypothesis are discussed.

Chapter Six introduces the hypothesis that Protestant fundamentalists disproportionately support separatism. A test of the hypothesis using EAS/WAS data is then discussed, which fails to indicate any significant relationship between the two variables. The hypothesis is not considered to be adequately tested, however, since the sample does not include a sufficient number of fundamentalists.

In Chapter Seven the main hypotheses and findings of the study are summarized. Suggestions for further research are also given, which include an outline of how to devise better empirical tests for the hypotheses generated. An appendix appears at the end of the study which describes the three data sources used.

2. WESTERN SEPARATISM: A BRIEF HISTORY

God didn't make Canada - Sir John A. Macdonald did - and there's quite a difference between the two. Doug Christie

This chapter traces the separatist movement's short but colorful history. It sets the stage for the analysis contained in subsequent chapters by identifying the immediate issues that surrounded the movement's origins and development - the 1980 federal election, the patriation and amendment of the Canadian constitution, and the introduction of the National Energy Program. In relating the history of the separatist movement, it is shown how western separatism evolved from a loosely arranged group of dissidents into a formalized party organization. A note on how recession-related unfulfilled expectations may have affected the separatist movement concludes the chapter. We begin with the federal election of 1980.

2.1 The 1980 Federal Election

The impetus for the western separatist movement[14] came on February 18, 1980, which was federal election day in Canada. On the front page of the *Edmonton Journal* that day was a large map of Canada which listed the names of the three major political parties on each province, with a blank opposite each party name. In order to capture the drama of the election, readers were told: "To keep track of the trends as the election unfolds on TV, fill in the province by province blanks on the Canada form chart". But when western Canadians turned on their TV sets as their local polls closed, the climax of the election drama had already been reached. Election coverage began in the west with the announcement that Joe Clark's nine month old minority government had toppled and that the Liberal Party was returned to power with a majority. There was to be no anxious waiting and counting seats in the west that night — the election was decided before any western votes were counted.[15] But what really angered westerners that evening was the fact that although they resoundingly rejected the Liberal Party at the polls — only two of the west's seventy-seven ridings elected Liberal candidates – they were to be governed by a Liberal administration. Western Canadians were stunned and felt left out of the national decision-making process.

---

[14] Throughout this thesis the people in the movement will be called "separatists" and will be described as advocating independence for western Canada, regardless of whether the west could ever, in fact, become truly independent. Participants in the movement claim that the west *could* be independent, hence their title. The issue of whether the separatists really *want* to form an independent western Canada is discussed in Chapter Four, pp.97-98.

[15] Garth Stevenson points out, quite correctly, that this would not have occurred if the sun rose in the west and set in the east (Canadian University Exchange Conference, University of Alberta, Edmonton, May 12, 1981).

Western separatism became an issue immediately. In Vancouver the morning following the election, radio station CJOR held an open line program in which 67 listeners called in favoring western independence, with 42 opposing it. In Calgary, the Canada West Foundation was swamped with calls from people who thought that it was a separatist organization.

In British Columbia the furor brought back to life a nascent separatist movement that had originally been formed in 1975.[16] It was founded by the then thirty year old Doug Christie, a dapper Victoria lawyer, in response to a letter he wrote to a Victoria newspaper. Christie's letter foreshadowed issues that would be political dynamite at tumultuous separatist rallies five years later:

> The movement recently among people in western Canada to demand a fair equity for resources located here has apparently been unsuccessful.
>
> Alberta, to prevent the conplete (sic) breakdown of the oil industry, has deferred to the demands of the central government who need (sic)

---

[16] A number of western separatist organizations were active in the late 1960s and mid 1970s. In 1969 Vancouver restaurant owner Bob Reeds formed the B.C Separatist Association, which folded after a brief period of operation. The early 1970s witnessed the birth of the Western National Party, which ran separatist candidates in federal elections. It had a short life span and was resurrected as the Free Country Party of B.C., which in turn folded after a short time. In 1974 The Independent Alberta Association was formed by Calgary oilman John Rudolph. All of these organizations were short-lived and did not attract substantial followings.

these resource revenues to buy votes in the East. This, of course, could not be the case if these revenue producing resources were located in eastern Canada (particularly in Quebec) and I would like your readers to consider why this is is so.

The primary reason the British North American (sic) Act can now be disregarded by the Trudeau government is the fact of Ontario's present 88 seat representation and Quebec's 74 seat representation, with Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta and B.C. having a total of 68 seats. This is a present fact of power which above all else makes exploitation of the West a political possibility.

Secondly, the media of communication, for reasons best known to themselves, concentrate their attention either on the acts and words of Trudeau or on the danger of dissidence from Quebec.

This comment is most (sic) directed to the CBC whose government sponsorship lends it the aura of legitimacy and the ability to propagandize at the public expense. The result of this fact is the inability of the West and by that I mean Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta and B.C. to see itself as an economically viable political unit.

Thirdly, bureacratic (sic) empire-building by governmental agencies directly or indirectly funded from Ottawa tends to support the contention that nothing is possible unless the civil servants say it is so.

A large segment of western Canadians have become indifferent to their future out of a sense of frustration with government as a whole.

They fail to realize that although their representation is inadequate to the task they could if united become a powerful political force because the west is infinitely valuable and in fact essential to east (sic) affluence and its value is directly proportionate to its unexhausted but rapidly depleting natural resources. This political power therefore will not last forever.

The problem is to awaken western Canadians to this situation and bring to bear the collective aspiration for fairness and efficiency in government. The method must be a realization of the freedom of the individual to associate and express his views in the democratic manner.

This letter is written in the hope that a few will awaken to their rights and form an association to unify and strengthen the voice of western Canada. Those who would like to, are invited to write to me ("A History Of The Committee For Western Independence" pamphlet, circa 1975).

Christie gathered enough support in 1975 to form the Committee For Western Independence, which eventually evolved into the Western National Association. That year he also tried unsuccessfully to win a B.C. Progressive Conservative nomination to run in the 1975 provincial election. In 1979 Christie was a candidate in the B.C. election for the Western Independence Party, which was formed by members of the Western National Association. He contested the Esquimalt-Port Renfrew riding on a separatist platform, but lost the election after receiving only 280 votes.

Christie and the Western National Association were inactive during the Clark regime, which was voted in on May 22, 1979, but resumed their activities following the 1980 federal election. Christie remained the leader of the organization, and on March 7, 1980, he told a crowd of 180 in Vancouver that it was time to stop the "spendthrift government in Ottawa [from] subsidizing the Communist takeover of the world", and that westerners in an independent west "would be speaking the language of English without shame, without fear, without apology" (*Vancouver Sun*, March 10, 1980, p. C20). Christie also decried federal government policy with regard to freight rates, tariffs, energy pricing and immigration.

In Alberta the reaction to the Liberal return to power was even more clamorous than the response in B.C. In Edmonton, sixty-six year old Elmer Knutson wrote a letter to the *Edmonton Journal* which typified the feeling of a small but increasingly vocal segment of the western Canadian population. Like Chrisie's 1975 letter, it too led to the development of a separatist organization.

> It started when Lester Pearson allowed the three wise men (Marchand, Trudeau, and Pelletier) from the East to enter the Liberal party.
>
> Since that time Trudeau has systematically turned the Liberal Party into a French dominated party which, during his time changed its philosophy, passed bilingual legislation, changed our traditional friends in the world, ran our country into debt, and divided the nation into francophones and anlglophones (something we were not before Trudeau) and finally, on February 18, 1980, polarized and politcally divided the nation into two camps, the francophone Liberals and the anglophone Conservatives and NDP.
>
> French power which Trudeau, Levesque, Lalonde, Pelletier, Marchand and the radical Quebecers of the '40s wanted, is finally a reality and Canada will never be the same. These 40's radicals had lost on May 22, 19~~7~~69, but the eulogies given Trudeau when he decided to retire, plus the fumbling of Joe Clark, resurrected Trudeau from the dead, and the final *coup de grace* came at eight p.m. Mountain Standard Time, February 18, 1980.
>
> Let us look at the Canada of February 19, 1980, the day that will be remembered as the day after the second battle of the Plains of Abraham when the anglophones lost and the French won.
>
> Trudeau has never made a secret of what he intends to do with Canada and now with a solid base in Quebec, and as he said before the election, with no need to keep an eye out for the next election, he will make his final moves, change the constitution and solidify French power in Canada.
>
> The rest of Canada must now analyse the election. The francophone Liberals received 73 seats in Quebec. Their other 73 came from Eastern Canada. As one looks at these numbers it is easy to realize that the Conservatives, who received 100 seats in the rest of Canada, are really the winners for the anglophone segment of our country.
>
> The Conservatives and the NDP, who represent Canada's angolphones, together received 134 seats but together they cannot win against the francophones, who are prepared to accept French power with the illusion they are keeping Canada together.
>
> I have always said that we must not allow Quebec to separate. I now say they must do so or we

> must kick them out. We must divorce but they cannot and must not be allowed to take all of the province of Quebec with them. We must take back the part ceded to Quebec and allow them only the small portion south of the St. Lawrence River, Montreal and Quebec City, and the territory they occupy.
>
> The divorce must be made now or Western Canada from the Ontario-Manitoba border must separate in fact, as we did politcally February 18th (*Edmonton Journal*, February 22, 1980, p.A5).

The response to Knutson's letter was astounding. It was reported that he received as many as 3,800 reply letters in one month, and that his business lines were tied up for weeks by sympathetic callers. Surprised but elated by this reaction, he formed the quasi-separatist Western Canada Federation, better known as "West-Fed", whose inauguration he announced on March 5.

West-Fed was a reincarnation of a 1930s organization of the same name which included Mr. Knutson's father as one of its members. It argued that the 1931 Statute of Westminster granted absolute sovereignty to to the provinces of Canada, and that the provinces never ratified the BNA Act. West-Feders contended that there is no law binding the provinces together as a national unit, and that therefore Confederation as it is commonly understood is a myth. Confederation, according to West-Fed, is the "greatest hoax of history" ("Western Canada Federation" booklet, p.18).

West-Fed promoted the idea that since the "provinces" are sovereign, there is no legal barrier to stop them from federating and forming an independent country. They argued that a western federation was necessary to deal with grievances pertaining to freight rates, oil pricing, tariffs, language policy and a number of other issues. However, although West-Fed cited political and economic issues in its list of grievances, the organization also presented itself as an anti-French Canadian association. This element was evident in Knutson's *Edmonton Journal* letter, and in his March 22, 1980 statement that "...Quebec has the right to its' (sic) sovereignty and can, and in fact, should separate. *If they do not*, then the four western provinces who are sovereign and own the land by Emminent (sic) Domain, should form a Federation" (My emphasis. "Western Canada Federation" booklet, p.4). Presumably West-Fed would have ended its campaign had the 1980 Quebec referendum been passed.[17]

In addition to separatist movements, the February 18 election also resulted in annexationist sentiments. In Saskatchewan, Progressive-Conservative leader Dick Colver and fellow PC MLA Dennis Ham resigned from the Tories to form the Unionest[18] party, which advocated union with the United States. Annexation proved to be a very unpopular idea, however, and the Unionest party never got more than a handful of supporters.

Thus within a month of the federal election, two avowed separatist organizations and an annexationist party had come to the fore in the west.

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[17] Knutson made the above remarks about two months prior to the referendum.
[18] The name "Unionest" was created by combining "union" (with the United States) and "best".

As leader of the Western National Association in 1980, Doug Christie set off to preach western independence to a jilted electorate. His plan was to have separatist MLAs form the government in the four western provinces and then hold Quebec-style referendums on independence in each province. Once each province had separatist governments they would negotiate the terms of union with one another and then put the terms of the agreement to western Canadian voters for ratification. In the months following the election, Christie offered this independence package:

1. Limited government and free enterprise.
2. Elimination of tariff barriers and establishment of our country as a free trade area.
3. Elimination of government subsidies.
4. Continuance of parliamentary democracy and constitutional monarchy.
5. Establishment of the English language as the official language.
6. Defence alliance with the United States for continental defence.
7. An invitation to other provinces and territories in Western Canada to join us in forming a new and greater nation.
8. Government regulation of industry and labour relations in labour courts.
9. The establishment of a lower House of Commons to control national affairs with representation by population balanced by an Upper House, whose elected representatives would be allocated on a regional basis, both bodies having original legislative jurisdiction, both being required to consent by majority to establish law, together with Royal assent.[Provincial governments would be eliminated.]
10. The Queen as head of the Commonwealth and Queen of Canada would have jurisdiction to appoint a Governor General in consultation with the cabinet of the majority party[19] ("A History Of The Committee For Western

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[19] The retention of the monarchy appears to contradict the notion of independence, but as we shall see below, retention and even increased recognition of the monarchy reflects the extremely conservative ideology of the separatists. Before Christie was active in the fight for western independence he had established a Royalist league in Victoria.

Independence" pamphlet, circa 1975,[20] pp.4-5).

In March, 1980, Christie stated that a "lack of political power" is why the west should separate, and "....that is not just the Liberal Party but the Liberal Party is the symptom of that. They exploit the interests of Western Canada and they cater to them at the expense of Western Canada. They succeed in doing that because they are solidly entrenched in Quebec and all they have to do is get half of Ontario to be the government" (*Vancouver Sun*, March 18, 1980, p.A11).

Christie also claimed that the regional balance of power would not have been affected if the PCs had won the 1980 election. He stated that "[i]f there were political decisions to be made that might affect detrimentally the interests of Quebec or Ontario, the party in power would be loath, in fact unwise to make them against those two provinces" (*Vancouver Sun*, March 18, 1980, p.A11). Nonetheless, the absence of separatist activity during the Clark regime suggests that the Conservatives were seen by the separatists as both more sensitive to western concerns, and more acceptable ideologically than the Liberals.

In July, 1980, an internal dispute in the Western National Association led to Christie's resignation. The group split into two factions, with Christie forming the Western Canada Concept (WCC) with his group of supporters. He obtained a court order requiring Western National

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[20] Although this pamphlet dates back to 1975, it was still used by Christie as a policy statement in 1980.

Association secretary Stan Bennet to turn the organization's files over to his group, but the court order was later reversed and Christie was forced to give the files up.

With a new name for his organization but fewer followers, Christie set off in the summer of 1980 on a 23 city tour across the west to promote western separatism. On the tour he reiterated his contention that central Canada economically and politically exploits the west. Christie stated that central Canada "has managed to protect itself... and therefore 80% of all manufacturing is done in Quebec and Ontario", and that Canada "...has remained that way since John A. Macdonald's national policy of 1867...nothing has really changed...the power stays down East and the resources...they are coming out to get them" (Halifax *Chronicle-Herald*, August 7, 1980, p.7). On the tour he also claimed that federal export taxes on oil cost the Alberta government $30 billion in eight years (*Vancouver Sun*, July 4, 1980, p.A15), that a western Canadian dollar would be worth $1.50 Canadian, and that there would be a 30% to 50% reduction in the cost of living if free trade were introduced in an independent west (*Winnipeg Free Press*, July 15, 1980). With regard to free trade, Christie made his oft-repeated pitch that "Ontario and Quebec don't produce anything, nothing at all, that we couldn't get quicker and cheaper from somewhere else" (*Vancouver Sun*, July 31, 1980, p.A18).

Christie's tour provided many western Canadians with their first glimpse of a separatist, but his goal of independence did not attract the serious attention of many people. Attendance at WCC meetings was sparse, and his tour received only short, back page coverage in the major Canadian newspapers. West-Fed also had a low public profile at this time. In the autumn of 1980, however, a series of events transpired which made western separatism a truly national issue. The first was Prime Minister Trudeau's plan to patriate and amend the Canadian constitution.

2.2 The New Constitution

Prime Minister Trudeau called a first ministers' conference for September 8-12, 1980 to discuss constitutional reform. Changing the constitution had been a major concern for Mr. Trudeau throughout his political career, but it became a priority following the defeat of the Parti Quebecois referendum the previous May. On the evening that the referendum was defeated, Trudeau stated that Quebecers had voted "massively" for change within the federal system, and that he would place a charter of rights and freedoms, including language rights, in a new Canadian constitution (*The Globe and Mail*, May 22, 1980, p.1).

The ten premiers and Mr. Trudeau failed to reach an agreement at the September conference. The discussions were tainted by the leak of a federal strategy paper which stated that it was unlikely that an accord could be reached at the conference, and which outlined a number of options available to the federal government that would enable it to proceed unilaterally.

On October 2 the Prime Minister held a nationally televised press conference where he announced that his government would go ahead with patriation and the placing of a charter of rights in the constitution without the consent of the provinces. Eight out of ten premiers and many groups and individuals in Canada disapproved of unilateral action[21] and various parts of the constitutional package itself, and western separatists were absolutely furious. Four months after Trudeau announced his constitutional plans Doug Christie told an Edmonton gathering:

> Think of what [Trudeau]'s talking about – the entrenchment of equalization payments, the entrenchment of the French language. He talks about human rights. But beneath that beautiful statue of human rights is the Trojan horse of linguistic rights...tied on the French language anywhere in Canada....Do you know what that means? It means a French judge, a French prosecutor, a French defence council, a French recorder...a French judge and jury if need be. That, indeed, in British Columbia and Alberta and Saskatchewan will be a very difficult thing to provide.....But you and I aren't given a choice about that, and western Canadians didn't choose the government that gives us that. The government in Ottawa was given a mandate by the people of Ontario and Quebec to give them gasoline without an 18 cents a gallon excise tax. That's what the last election was fought about. Remember? (WCC rally, February 6, 1981)

The absence of an explicit statement in the constitution protecting property rights especially angered separatists. Dexter Dombro, the WCC justice critic, argued that their exclusion was the first step in the "sovietization" of Canada (Author's conversation with Mr. Dombro, January, 1982).[22] Elmer Knutson claimed that Trudeau's constitutional proposals demonstrated that the west has no future in Confederation (*Edmonton Journal* , October 3, 1980, p.A2).

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[21] In the Canada West Foundation Survey used in this study, 68% of the respondents disapproved of unilateral action.

Western opposition to the constitutional proposals led to increased talk of separatism. The Prime Minister, however, dismissed the notion that the west would separate, stating that "[t]he chances of western separatism are absolutely, absolutely nil and non-existent. ...The threat [of separatism] has been raised in the last century by some of the eastern provinces. It has been raised rather consistently by Quebec. Now you say it is current in the west. So what?" (*The Gazette* (Montreal), October 24, 1980, p.9) Trudeau also recommended that westerners "take a leaf from Quebec's book and get involved in government in Ottawa rather than always sitting in the opposition benches" (Toronto *Star*, October 23, 1980, p.A1).

The Prime Minister made a trip to the west in an effort to assuage western anger on the constitutional issue, but like many of his previous trips, it ended in disaster. On the tour he stated that the western response to his constitutional initiatives was "hysteria" and a "gut reaction" (*Edmonton Journal*, October 31,1980, p.A8), which had the effect of fuelling rather than extinguishing western wrath. Carl Nickel, a well-known Calgary oilman, remarked that "Mr. Trudeau's comments in Regina caused alot of us to take the plunge [to join West-Fed]...."(*The Globe and Mail*, November 8, 1980, p.1).

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[22] Ironically, the Trudeau government originally wanted to include property rights in the constitution, but later excluded them in order to strike a bargain with the provincial premiers. Five premiers (including Peter Lougheed) were opposed to enshrining property rights in the constitution.

Less than four weeks after the Trudeau government announced its constitutional proposals, it embarked on a new energy policy that also met with vehement disapproval in the west.

2.3 The National Energy Program

Although the federal election and the constitutional issue raised the ire of many westerners, the National Energy Program (NEP) and the federal budget introduced on October 28, 1980 seemed to anger western Canadians more than any other event. The NEP placed an 8% tax on oil and gas revenues for which there was no allowance for capital costs, exploration, development or interest payments; and a change in depletion allowances also increased federal taxation. Tax incentives which favored Canadian owned oil companies were introduced, as well as a new oil pricing scheme. The federal government claimed that the NEP would reduce Alberta's share of total petroleum revenues by only 2% (from 45% to 43%), increase the federal take from 10% to 24%, and decrease the oil companies' share from 43% to 33%.

The reaction in the west to the NEP and budget was explosive. The *Edmonton Journal* claimed that "[w]ith the budget, Prime Minister Trudeau's government sticks the petroleum-producing western provinces with a multi-billion-dollar piece of the bill for the federal government's huge deficit" (October 29, 1980, p.1). Alberta Energy Minister Mervin Leitch called the NEP "a massive discriminatory attack on resources owned by the people of Alberta", while his British Columbia counterpart Bob McClelland stated that "[i]t's an abandonment of us in the west. ...It's a direct attack on a resource that was given to our province as one of the terms of entry into Confederation. They're changing the constitution with what is called an energy budget" (*Edmonton Journal*, October 29, 1980, p.1). Rene Levesque took a similar stand on the issue: "They've ravaged Alberta's resources to cut down the federal deficit. ...That doesn't bother me immediately. But it means in one or two years, if the federal government needs more money, they can start rampaging around for Quebec's power resources" (*Edmonton Journal*, October 31, 1980, p.A8).

Two days after the NEP and budget were introduced, Alberta premier Lougheed made a province-wide television broadcast in which he castigated the federal government for introducing the new energy plan. Although the tone of his address was conciliatory, his message was clear — the NEP and budget were unacceptable to the government of Alberta. Lougheed stated that they were "an outright attempt to take over the resources of this province owned by each of you as Albertans", and "I think what's happened is that the Ottawa government has, without negotiation, without agreement, simply walked into our home and occupied the living room."

Lougheed also announced in his address to Albertans that as a protest against the NEP he would reduce oil production in the province by 15% (180,000 barrels a day) and suspend work on the two massive oil sands and tar sands projects in Alberta. It was estimated that the federal government would have to spend $1 billion per year in the world oil market to replace the oil held back by Alberta.

Without question, the NEP and budget as well as the response given them by provincial politicians boosted support for western separatism. Talk of separatism sprang up again across the west, and once again Mr. Trudeau's public comments on the issue appeared to make matters worse. Two days after the NEP was introduced he stated that the west must not use the threat of separatism as "blackmail", and he told westerners: "Threaten to upset the Government and vote for another party. Do all you want. But don't threaten to break up the country unless you get what you're asking for" (*The Globe and Mail*, October 31, 1980, p.8).

2.4 The Rallies

Shortly after the introduction of the NEP and budget a rash of separatist rallies were held throughout the west. On November 3, 1980 one hundred people showed up at the

Macdonald Hotel in Edmonton to hear Doug Christie speak. Two days later Christie addressed a crowd of 250 at a southside Edmonton banquet room. Noting the large number of lawyers, petroleum engineers, accountants and businessmen that attended the meetings, the media suggested that "blue chip" separatists were at the heart of the movement (e.g. *The Globe and Mail*, November 8, 1980, p.1).

West-Fed held a meeting at Airdrie, near Calgary, on November 12 which drew over 500 people. The keynote speaker was Warren Blackman, a University of Calgary economist, who warned the audience that the federal government was transforming Canada into a socialist state. Two days later separatism was given a note of respectability when Carl Nickel spoke in support of western independence to over 800 "blue chippers" at a meeting sponsored by West-Fed in Calgary. Nickel, a former Conservative MP who sits on the board of a number of companies operating in Alberta, claimed that he cancelled plans to drill 50 new exploration wells in the coming year because of the changes introduced in the NEP affecting oil and gas revenues. A few days before the meeting he stated: "There are friendships and links with the rest of Canada. But emotional things can only go so far to hold a country together when Ottawa treats us in the west like an economic colony" (*The Globe and Mail*, November 15, 1980). In the following weeks West-Fed held several similar gatherings, two of which attracted over 1000 people.

On November 20, 1980 the largest separatist rally ever held took place at the Jubilee Auditorium in Edmonton. An emotionally charged crowd of 2700 heard Doug Christie shout beneath a huge bannner reading "FREE THE WEST" that the west has been "raped and plundered" by Ontario and Quebec, and that "[i]f we wait ten more years and let Trudeau drain away our land, our heritage...we will be left like the white man left the Blackfoot - destitute... and begging for handouts" (*Edmonton Journal*, November 21, 1980, p.1).

At the rally Christie chastised Trudeau for not fighting in World War II and for carrying on friendly relations with Fidel Castro. At a heady point in the proceedings he announced: "I have a feeling this is a moment in history tonight. ...We are waking up" (*Edmonton Journal*, November 21, 1980, p.1). The event received national media attention and the size of the crowd led may Canadians to wonder if the support for separatism had been underestimated. Later that month Elmer Knutson said that he would urge West-Fed members, which he estimated to number 30,000, to withhold their federal income taxes due the following year.[23]

In December Christie attempted to match his crowded November 20 rally in Edmonton by staging a similar meeting in Calgary. Approximately 1000 people showed, but organizers were expecting over twice that number and expressed some disappointment with the turnout.

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[23] The tax revolt never materialized.

West-Fed started off 1981 with large rallies in Vancouver and Edmonton. The Vancouver gathering attracted about 1300 people, while the Edmonton meeting filled about half of the 2700 seats in the Jubilee Auditorium. These were to be the last of the large rallies.

The discontinuance of the rallies signalled the end of the first phase of the separatist movement. Up to this point the two major separatist organizations endeavored to capture public and media attention by holding huge rallies at which sympathizers could vehemently express their anger towards the federal government. Now serious organization would be necessary to right the wrongs that they cried out against. In Hoffer's (1951) terminology, the "active" phase of the movement, which draws its strength from "true believers" and "fanatics", had come to an end. The separatist movement was becoming, of necessity, institutionalized.[24]

2.5 Western Separatism as an Organized Movement

West-Fed announced that its goals for 1981 would include attaining a membership of 400,000 and raising $4 million to launch a massive advertising campaign. The organization proposed to achieve its aims without becoming a political party - members of all parties were encouraged to pressure their MLAs into implementing West-Fed's proposals. Their political moves were to begin by petitioning the four western provincial governments to hold a referendum, which would ask the following question: "Do you wish the people of Alberta (Manitoba, Saskatchewan, British Columbia) to withdraw all powers of government over the people of Alberta from the Canadian central government?"[25] (West-Fed Association of Alberta pamphlet) Once the referendum was passed, a "constituent assemby" would be elected to draw up a western Canadian constitution, which was to be the basis of a "true federation" in which the regional powers of each province would be well defined. The new constitution would then have to be approved by the legislature in each province.

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[24] See S.D. Clark (1975, pp.22-35) for a discussion of institutionalization in social movements.

It is important to note that the constitution was to be drawn up by 'the people' in a constituent assembly, and only later approved by the legislature in each province. This is indicative of the separatists' general mistrust of politicians, which also manifests itself in their desire for direct democracy.[26] Moreover it suggests that western separatism is a grassroots movement, i.e. a movement of those outside the institutional power structure.

It soon became apparent that West-Fed would not achieve its goals. Its public image was repeatedly blemished by Knutson's caustic attacks on Prime Minister Trudeau's private life and his allegedly evil intentions. To make matters worse, it distributed a comic book style pamphlet (published by Speak Up Publishing of Toronto) which claimed that Trudeau was stealthily becoming a socialist dictator in Canada. At a meeting in February, 1981, Knutson apparently made openly racist remarks when he spoke of "wops" and "chinks", although he insisted that the media had presented his comments "out of context" (*Alberta Report*, March 27, 1981, p.4). Allegations of racism were to haunt the separatists from that date on.

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[25] This question, of course, contradicted the official West-Fed position that the provinces are sovereign.
[26] The separatists' advocacy of direct demorcracy is discussed in greater detail in Chapter Three.

Another problem for West-Fed was that their plan to work through the established political parties was totally unsuccessful. Knutson sent a letter to the four western premiers (in which he misspelled two of the four premiers' names) that outlined the "Confederation is a myth" argument to them. In his letter Knutson compared Trudeau and Levesque to Lenin, Hitler, Mussolini and Mao Tse-tung. (The latter was another name he could not spell correctly.) He also urged the four premiers to form a western federation to stave off "the Francophone march across Canada" (Western Canada Federation pamphlet). The premiers ignored the letter and gave no indication that they would support West-Fed, although Premier Lougheed was criticized for not explicitly condemning separatism.

West-Fed also lost credibility with the public when members played "O Canada" and flew the Canadian flag at their meetings. People further wondered about the sincerity of the group when it used the slogan "independence if necessary, but not necessarily independence",[27] and when Knutson himself would state "I'm not a separatist!". These remarks came after the organization had proclaimed: "The Only True Solution - Independence" (West-Fed Association of Alberta pamphlet), and "West-Fed is dedicated to independence" (West-Fed Association of Alberta information sheet).

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[27] Apparently this slogan is an adaptation of Mackenzie King's "conscription if necessary, but not necessarily

The cracks in West-Fed's platform really began to show in March, 1981 when four members of the group's Calgary executive resigned, including President Don Noyes and Vice-President June Sayer. The resignations took place following a March 13 meeting at which a motion calling for Knutson to step down from the leadership was defeated. The disgruntled former executive members claimed that Knutson's ideology was far too right-wing for their liking and that his public comments verged on racism.

Public interest in West-Fed began to decline. In November, 1980, West-Fed had attracted 1500 people to Calgary's Henry Wise Wood High School auditorium, but only five months later they drew less than 25 people to the same auditorium for the annual meeting of the Calgary region.

More executive resignations followed. In March, Edmonton regional President Robert Lee quit, and later Edmonton Vice-President Anne Wyness left the organization. Their resignations were followed by that of Red Deer regional President Howard Thompson.[28] They and other

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[27] (cont'd)conscription" gimmick used during World War II.

[28] Thompson, like many other frustrated West-Feders, later joined the WCC.

West-Fed members became dissatisfied with the group's lack of progress on the political front, and felt that the grass roots level of the organization did not have enough influence over West-Fed policy and tactics. Knutson denied this, stating that "[s]ome of the people elected [to executive positions in West-Fed] such as in Calgary, took a whole bunch of authority onto themselves, and started running the whole show without consulting the membership" (*Alberta Report*, April 10, 1981), but former Edmonton Vice-President Wyness claimed that "[t]he regional offices didn't have any authority. Everything had to be cleared through the central office" (*Alberta Report*, April 10, 1981).

Western Canada Concept had its difficulties in 1981 as well. From January to June Doug Christie promoted the cause of western independence in twenty-five cities and towns throughout the four western provinces, but failed to convince many listeners to join his organization.

In May the WCC held their first annual general meeting where they elected a 'national' executive and board of directors that was to be responsible for WCC activities in all four western provinces. Christie was voted in as party Leader; Al Maygard, an Edmonton realtor, became President; Gordon Reid was voted Vice-President; Christie's father, Doug Christie Sr., became the new Treasurer; and Miss Keltie Zubko was elected party Secretary.

In his opening remarks at the May general meeting Christie spoke with the eloquence of a 'true believer'. In his address, which was closer to a prayer than a speech, he hinted that internal dissention was beginning to surface in the WCC:

> This is a day to build. In your deliberations keep in mind that the cause of Freedom and independence is not the cause of an hour, a day or a year but the cause of a lifetime and so must be our commitment, step by step to build a new nation, far from the injustices of the old, as long as we are free to do so.
>
> Keep in mind no great enterprise was ever achieved quickly but only from effort over time with perseverance. This cause is founded in fact and truth which cannot change with public opinion or for light or transient causes.
>
> Think not in terms of your place within the party but of your service to the party for the good of the cause.
>
> Look beyond the boundaries of this province to the people of other provinces whose grievances are the same and who look to us for a solution, that we may form a strong alliance of those in Western Canada who seeing the injustices of Canada look to Independence for a better way.
>
> Let us stand by our principles for more people want on us today than those present or even those presently living in this land, for what we could build for them is new and good in the world. If factions divide us and weaken our cause, the injustice of the federal system will be left as a legacy for Future generations.
>
> Be vigilant of the enemy within as well who appeals to pride and seeks discord among us, undermining our policies and unity of purpose. The end of confusion is defeat, clarity is victory. Emerging as an articulate party of separatists is the only thing that the enemy fears and he will do anything to prevent our unity of purpose.
>
> With these thoughts in mind let us prepare to build a party which will have a part in building a nation for without us no such hope exists. This awesome truth should make us sober and sensible to the end that order prevails here and henceforth in our work of educating, convincing and winning the people of Western Canada for Freedom, liberty and

Independence (WCC information sheet).[29]

On July 1, 1981, the seemingly indefatigable Christie embarked on his third major speaking tour of the west, which involved holding 38 speaking engagements in 32 days. His speeches on the summer tour were not grandstanding affairs like those he delivered the previous fall. He appealed to listeners to take an active part in the WCC organization by establishing constituency associations in their areas. He calmly tried to convince them that a good deal of work had to be done to prepare for the next provincial election.

Christie had been superb at raising the emotions of people at large rallies. In Edmonton the previous November he intoxicated most of the 2700 persons who came out to hear him. But when it came to day-to-day organizational matters, Doug Christie was an abysmal failure. Once serious organizational matters had to be dealt with, WCC members began to complain that he refused to delegate authority. Members were also put off with the intransigence he showed with regard to his policy of unitary government for the west[30] and his disapproval of a proposal to set up an Alberta provincial WCC executive.

Christie suffered the fate of countless other charismatic figures - people either thought he was the messiah or saw him as a power hungry egomaniac. Towards the end of the summer of 1981, a growing number of WCC members began to adopt the latter opinion. One WCC supporter described Christie's disposition as follows:

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[29] This appears to be an instance of what Hoffer (1951, p.15) terms "religiofication", which he defines as "the art of turning practical purposes into holy causes". Religiofication is also evident in Christie's "Western Independence Crusade", discussed below on p.44.

[30] Christie wanted to eliminate provincial governments entirely and have one central government rule over an independent west.

> It always seems to be the problem that people who have only heard Doug Christie speak are all in favor of him. He's a great speaker. ...However, when it comes to administration he seems to rub people a bit the wrong way. And people who've had a close contact with him tend to get negative feelings (WCC Meeting, Edmonton, October 24, 1981).

Christie's fall from grace began when he was not invited to a key WCC meeting that was held in early August, 1981. At the meeting it was decided that a WCC convention would take place the following September 12. An August 20 meeting was then held where, according to an anti-Christie faction led by national President Maygard, a resolution was passed calling for an Alberta WCC organization and executive. National Secretary Zubko denied that such a resolution was passed and claimed that the tapes she made of the meeting proved it. The anti-Christie faction, which strongly opposed his policy of unitary government and which allegedly introduced the resolution calling for an Alberta WCC organization, claimed that Zubko's tapes were altered to exclude the resolution.

At the September 12 meeting an Alberta executive was voted in. Al Maygard was selected as interim Alberta WCC Leader and Calgary oil consultant Hilton "Wes" Westmore was chosen interim Alberta President. Christie spoke out against the formation of an Alberta executive at the meeting, claiming that the 'national' executive elected in May could best organize WCC activities in the province. He supposedly walked out when the vast majority in attendance rejected his proposals.

Both Christie and Zubko threatened to resign over the issue and recommended that a general membership meeting be called where a vote of confidence could be taken regarding Christie's leadership. Such a meeting was held on October 24, 1981 in Edmonton, but it degenerated into a mud slinging match between pro- and anti-Christie factions. The anti-Christie group won out after an informal show of hands vote was taken on Christie's leadership, although no one had time to carefully count the votes. Christie walked out followed by his supporters, but no one was exactly sure what his status with the WCC was.

An Alberta WCC convention was then scheduled for November 27 and 28 in Red Deer. Apparently to rival the convention and test his support in the WCC, Christie scheduled a meeting for November 27 in Edmonton. Over 300 people showed up in Red Deer where an elaborate constitution and a political platform were adopted. However, no election was held for the position of Alberta Party Leader. *the Independencer*, the WCC monthly newspaper, states: "As the position of party leader was not up [at the Red Deer convention], Al Maygard stayed on in that position...." (January, 1982, p.6) Whether the position was not contestable or whether Mr. Maygard won by acclamation is not clear. Perhaps it was feared that Doug Christie would show up and run for the leadership. In any event, Christie did not show and attracted only 25 people at his meeting in Edmonton.

At the Edmonton meeting Christie looked haggard and defeated, speaking behind a banner which read "Western Independence Crusade". His speech contained much of the same material that he had spoken on time and time again over the previous six years, but it was clear that he was losing his sting. His only new twist was to urge any musicians in attendance to join him, saying that singing would soon become a part of his meetings.

It was obvious that the WCC had abondoned Christie. All he had left was the hope of generating more emotion through his "crusade". The small audience applauded warmly at the end of the meeting, but it was painfully clear to Christie that he had no future in the separatist movement in Alberta. The man who had brought the house down at Edmonton's Jubilee Auditorium only a year earlier was now on his own.

By January, 1982, it seemed that western separatism was dying a slow death. Two major issues that the separatists were fighting had been resolved - a deal had been struck between Ottawa and Alberta which seemed to smooth out the rough edges of the NEP, and the Canadian constitutional accord had been reached. The two crowd pleasers in the movement, Christie and Knutson, no longer held any sway in their organizations. Separatist meetings were no longer newsworthy, except when internal rifts could be exposed.

West-Fed had almost totally disintegrated by this time. The organization was inactive and had lost many prominent members to the WCC. It was announced by the WCC that West-Fed of Alberta had merged with it (*the Independencer*, January, 1982, p.1), but Knutson later denied this in the press.

The first real test of public support for separatism (and some pundits predicted that it would be the last) came on February 17, 1982, in the Alberta by-election at Olds-Didsbury. The WCC candidate, Gordon Kesler, ran ads on local television which showed him riding his horse through the Alberta countryside. The TV time gave him the public image of being a concerned but macho cowboy.[31]

Throughout his campaign Kesler extolled the virtues of free enterprise, which he claimed Peter Lougheed's government no longer believed in. He also spoke out against the National Energy Program, which he dubbed the "National Extermination Program". The most widely discussed plank in his election platform was his contention that property rights would not be protected under the new Canadian constitution - something that separatists had been arguing since the initial constitutional proposals were introduced. Kesler dramatized his position by stating that the federal government would be given the authority under the new constitution to confiscate a citizen's farm, his automobile and even the coat off his back.

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[31] Kesler is a former rodeo rider.

The results of the by-election stunned nearly everyone. Premier Lougheed had taunted the separatists by daring them to run a candidate in Olds-Didsbury, expecting them to be badly embarassed by the results. Moreover, previous to the election separatists had the public image of being on the lunatic fringe. They were seen as right-wing zealots with whom the general public had little sympathy. Seven months before the by-election *Edmonton Sun* reporter John Geiger wrote:

> So Doug Christie and his group of misfits known collectively as Western Canada Concept (WCC) plan to run a candidate in Olds-Didsbury once a provincial by-election is called. There could not be better news for Canadians who want to rid themselves of this group of throwbacks.
>
> For close to a year we have seen publications like Alberta Report give these losers some credibility.... They made it appear that Western separatism was fairly wide-spread - when in reality it is just an Alberta version of the Ku Klux Klan....
>
> ...The participation of Western Canada Concept in the Olds-Didsbury by-election and in the next provincial election will be a welcome addition. But despite Doug [Christie]'s and Elmer [Knutson]'s best efforts separatists appear to most Albertans to be little more than a splinter group of the Rhino party (*Edmonton Sun*, July 14, 1981).[32]

When the votes were tallied Kesler won by a large margin. He received 4,025 votes, which accounted for 42% of all votes cast. Social Credit candidate Loyd Quantz came in second after receiving only 2,682 votes, while Tory candidate Stephen Stiles placed third with 2,420.

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[32] Mr. Christie immediately launched a lawsuit against the *Sun* claiming that he was libeled in the article.

Predictably, Lougheed asserted that the outcome was primarily an anti-Trudeau vote (*Edmonton Journal*, February 18, 1982, p.1). Trudeau, showing his traditional scorn for western dissent, claimed the WCC victory was the result of racist and hate propaganda against his government (*The Globe and Mail*, February 22, 1982, p.6). Some observers figured that it was a 'protest vote' by Olds-Didsbury constituents who wanted to demonstrate their frustration with both the provincial and federal governments. They voted separatist, the explanation goes, knowing that there was no chance that a separatist government could be formed.[33] Very few Canadians felt the Olds-Didsbury election heralded the beginning of a successful separatist movement, but it did convince many that western separatism was a force to be reckoned with.

To dedicated WCC members the victory signified the dawning of a new age. It boosted their confidence and made being a separatist more socially acceptable. The 'true believers' had their faith confirmed by the election of Kesler, and many skeptical but separatist leaning people were converted by the results. An example of the latter is Dr. Fred Marshall, an Edmonton M.D. who perfunctorily supported the WCC before the election but afterward became an active organizer for the group.

Everything seemed to favor the WCC following Olds-Didsbury. Just as the euphoria of victory began to wear off, *Alberta Report* released a poll which indicated that support for the Alberta PCs had dropped to 36% (they had captured 57% of the popular vote in 1979), and that support for their own party was second only to the Tories at 14%. Of those polled, 12% backed the NDP, 5% the Liberals and 2% Social Credit. A huge 31% were undecided (*Alberta Report*, March 8, 1982, p.6).

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[33] Similar analyses were made of the Parti Quebecois when they began to win a few seats in the early 1970s.

To top things off, the WCC got an official vote of confidence from West-Fed. At a March press conference, Alberta West-Fed president R.S. Matheson recommended that members of the organization join the WCC (*Alberta Report*, March 22, 1982, p.8). Mr. Matheson stated that West-Fed hopes to continue as a research and lobby group, but many political observers took the announcement to be the organization's swan song.

The enthusiasm of success spilled over into Saskatchewan, where a provincial election was scheduled for April 26. The Saskatchewan WCC became a registered party on March 11, and in subsequent weeks managed to field candidates in 40 of the province's 64 ridings. The Saskatchewan WCC's rushed efforts were successful in drawing large crowds to rallies at towns like Weyburn, Rosetown, Melville and Prince Albert, but failed to win many converts – the party ended up with less than 3% of the popular vote and no seats.

WCC fortunes were further worsened when party members in Alberta began to give conflicting statements regarding the WCC's stand on independence. Some supporters stated publicly that the WCC was not a separatist party, while others gave divergent accounts of how independence was to be achieved.

The party suffered more serious setbacks when Alberta President Wes Westmore and Alberta Leader Al Maygard resigned from the provincial executive, ostensibly because Gordon Kesler was taking a soft stand on independence. Another version of the resignations has it that after Olds-Didsbury most of the party's activities took place in Kesler's office at the legislature rather than at WCC provincial headquarters, which were located at Maygard's real estate office. Party power, it seems, had shifted to Mr. Kesler. The bitter accusations and name calling that ensued made sensational news stories and further blemished the party's public image.

A WCC convention was held the following July, which was also by and large an embarassment to the party. The procedural wranglings and the executive's attempted purge of undesirable members that occurred at the convention were nothing new to formal WCC meetings, but the increased press coverage that attended party gatherings after Kesler's election brought such practices into full public view for the first time.

A leadership convention was held the following month, which was contested by Mr. Kesler, Elmer Knutson,[34] party organizer Howard Thompson and three other candidates.[35] Kesler defeated Thompson on the final ballot in a close 284 to 246 vote. However, the party unity that WCC members had hoped the leadership convention would bring about never materialized. Critics of Kesler claimed that after the convention he had little use for his former leadership opponents, especially Howard Thompson, who had a substantial following in the party (*Alberta Report*, October 25, 1982, p.6).

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[34] Knutson joined the WCC in spite of efforts by Kesler supporters on the party executive to disallow his

When Premier Lougheed called a provincial election on October 5, 1982, it became clear that the WCC was seriously fragmented, disorganized and out of funds. Howard Thompson announced that he would endorse the newly-formed Provincial Rights Association and run as an independent.[36] Elmer Knutson also abandoned the party to run as an independent, claiming that Kesler would not approve of his candidacy as a WCC member. Robert Snell, who ran against Kesler for the Highwood WCC nomination, also left the party, prefering to run under the Provincial Rights Association banner. Snell tried to discredit Kesler during the campaign by claiming that Kesler stole from party funds that were collected at a WCC dinner the previous April.

The comedy of errors continued when WCC officials announced that party TV commercials were being taped in

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[34](cont'd)membership.

[35] Mr. Maygard did not seek the leadership. In April, 1983, Maygard and Wes Westmore founded the Independence Party of Alberta, which, unlike the current WCC, is staunchly and explicitly separatist.

[36] Kesler later denounced the association as a Tory plot.

Ontario. This was necessary, they claimed, because the Tories would steal their ideas if the advertisements were produced locally. Moreover, the confusion over the party's position on independence was never clarifed during the campaign. Kesler played down the independence issue, preferring to make election promises that included the creation of a home mortgage subsidy and the payment of a cash grant of $1000 to every person that voted in the election. The latter was to be paid if the WCC received a majority of the votes (*Edmonton Journal*, October 9, 1982, p.1).

The election was a bitter disappointment for the WCC. The party received 12% of the popular vote but no seats. A dejected Kesler regretted that in re-electing the Tories the province had swung so far to the left, claiming that the election "...proved that Albertans are prepared to accept socialism on a full scale" (*Edmonton Journal*, November 3, 1982, p.B9).

Two weeks later Kesler announced that he would like to see the WCC drop its support for independence entirely. He suggested that many people who voted Tory did so in order to defeat separatism, not to keep Peter Lougheed in power. He claimed that the party could pursue its goals at the provincial level (*Edmonton Journal*, November 14, 1982, p.1). In a straw vote held in Edmonton on June 25, 1983, party supporters voted 120 to 42 in favor of retaining independence as part of the WCC platform. Kesler and five board members declared themselves opposed in principle to separation, and resigned.

We have seen that the separatist movement grew out of a series of crises in Canada: the federal election of 1980, the adoption of a new national constitution, and the implementation of the National Energy Program. Concomitant with these factors, however, was a major economic recession, which had followed a period of boom. This chapter concludes with a brief look at how the unfulfilled expectations of the recession may have affected the separatist movement.

2.6 Western Separatism and the Theory of Rising Expectations

The situation in the west at the time that separatism appeared seems to provide a textbook illustration of the theory of rising expectations. The theory sheds some light on the paradox that a separatist movement developed in a rich and prosperous region of the country, and on the fact that the movement finds its greatest support in Alberta, which at the outset of the movement was the wealthiest province in the country.

The theory of rising expectations involves the notion of "relative deprivation", which is the gap between what people receive and what they expect to receive or feel they deserve. The idea has its roots in Alexis de Tocqueville's (1856/1955) analysis of the French Revolution. de Toqueville found that the revolution was not centered in the poorer regions of France as one might expect, but instead in areas that had experienced an increase in the standard of living. His explanation was that as conditions improve, people expect that they will continue to improve. If they do not, those affected will seek to remove anything that they perceive to be impeding further progress, including established governments. For this reason people living in squalor are unlikely to revolt, he argued, whereas those who have experienced some betterment of conditions often do. Crane Brinton (1938/1960) uses a similar idea in his analysis of four major revolutions.

More recent use of the concept has been made by Davies (1962/1971), who altered the argument somewhat by hypothesizing that unrest often occurs in situations where an improvement in conditions is followed by a sharp reversal of fortunes. Using the theory of rising expectations in his study of revolutions, Davies writes:

> Revolutions are most likely to occur when a prolonged period of objective economic and social development is followed by a period of sharp reversal. The all-important effect on the minds of people in a particular society is to produce, during the former period, an expectation of continued ability to satisfy needs - which continue to rise - and, during the latter, a mental state of anxiety and frustration when manifest reality breaks away from anticipated reality. The actual state of socioeconomic development is less significant than the expectation that progress now blocked, can and must continue in the future (1971, p.136).[37]

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[37] For a classic statement on the effect of rising expectations on suicide rates, see Durkheim, 1897/1951, pp.241-277.

Expectations were high and rising in the west in the late 1970s and in 1980. Everything in the region seemed to be booming. On the political scene, in 1979 the federal government was formed by a party that received broad electoral support in the west, and which seemed to be favorable to western interests. (The former is something of an historical anomaly.) There was even talk of an economic and political 'power shift west'.[38] But just when westerners were about to realize their dreams of prosperity and national power, it appeared that the new Liberal government had come along and perversely snatched it all away. Within approximately two months of the announcement of the NEP and budget, forty-three oil drilling rigs were transferred out of Canada to the United States, and an additional 174 went out of service (*The Globe and Mail*, January 5, 1981, p.6). It was estimated by the Canadian Association of Oilwell Drilling Contractors that 2,660 petroleum industry jobs were lost during the same period, in addition to 8,700 industry-related jobs. In January, 1981, Syncrude officials announced that the company's planned $2 billion expansion at Fort McMurray was "suspended" (*The Globe and Mail*, January 14, 1981, p.B1), and soon doubts about the viability of the massive oil sands project proposed for Cold Lake were expressed. Both projects were eventually cancelled. Before long it was clear that the boom was over, and that the expectations it generated were shattered. This feeling is captured in the following *Alberta Report* editorial:

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[38] A symposium on this issue was held at the University of Alberta in March, 1980. A collection of papers presented at the symposium can be found in the Canadian Journal of Sociology, Volume 6, 1981, pp.165-183.

> We have much to scream about. We know that little more than two years ago, before Mr. Trudeau and his loathsome menage were revisited upon us, our province verged on its finest era. Two gigantic heavy oil projects were all but ready to begin. We were embarked upon the greatest search for self-sufficiency in energy that our technology could devise. Our artists flourished, and our farmers produced more food than they ever produced before. Agreements were being worked out by all levels of government that would have launched us into a shining decade. All this is scarcely a memory. One heavy oil plant lies in ruins. The other seems all but doomed. Our drillers desert the country, our rig workers line up for the dole, bankruptcy haunts our truckers, our developers fold, our cattlemen face foreclosure, scores of houses stand empty because no one can afford to buy them, and a pall of loss and uncertainty hangs over the decade *which held such promise*. For all of this, we can thank that repulsive clutch at Ottawa in general, and the bungling insanity of their National Energy Program in particular (My emphasis. March 15, 1982, p.60).

Hopes were high, but for many they were never to be fulfilled. As we have seen above, this often results in serious unrest. There is thus good reason to suspect that unfulfilled expectations played a major role in the social psychology of western separatism, especially insofar as an 'obvious' cause of the malaise – the federal government – could be identified.

We now turn from the immediate events that precipitated the the separatist movement to a discussion of three macro-theoretical perspectives that may help us make sense of these events. The three theoretical perspectives discussed – the frontier thesis, staple theory and the metropolis-hinterland perspective – examine the argument put forth by separatists and others that the west is an economic and political hinterland of central Canada.

3. MACRO-THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES:
THE WEST AS HINTERLAND

> *Our province and our people have lived with the rules of Confederation, including paying for freight rates, paying for tariffs, paying equalization, in our total history. Now circumstances have for a short period of time altered to favor our province and the federal government, supported by the Ontario government, are trying to change the rules. Albertans know and understand this instinctively. And they consider it unfair in the extreme.* Peter Lougheed, 1980

This chapter examines the contention made by separatists and other alienated westerners that the west is politically and economically dominated by central Canada. Chapter Four will show that for the separatists, this contention goes beyond a claim of regional inequity – members of the movement believe that the regional imbalance of power permits the destruction of their way of life. However, before we reach this step in the analysis, we will first consider their argument that the west is a hinterland of central Canada.

There is a large body of theoretical literature pertaining to the west's role in Confederation. In the literature three perspectives stand out as offering a fruitful analysis of the separatists' regional grievances: the frontier thesis, staple theory and the metropolis-hinterland perspective. The discussion of these three perspectives proceeds deductively. A description of each theory is given, followed by a discussion of how each perspective is relevant to the separatist movement. However, before we begin the discussion of the theoretical orientations relevant to western separatism, we shall first consider the following warning given to social scientists by Max Weber:

> Nothing, however, is more dangerous than the *confusion* of theory and history stemming from naturalistic prejudices. This confusion expresses itself firstly in the belief that the "true" content and the essence of historical reality is portrayed in such theoretical constructs or secondly, in the use of these constructs as a procrustean bed into which history is to be forced or thirdly, in the hypostatization of such "ideas" as real "forces" and as "true" reality which operates behind the passage of events and which works itself out in history (1949, p.94. Italics in original).

What Weber is warning against is the over simplification of history that often accompanies the attempt to analyze it in terms of a theoretical system or model. Thus although the theoretical perspectives discussed below may help us understand some of the regional issues relevant to western separatism, we must not assume that they adequately integrate all the factors that have converged to produce the separatist movement.

We begin with a discussion of the frontier thesis.

3.1 The Frontier Thesis

The American historian Frederick Jackson Turner first developed the frontier thesis. It gained considerable currency after Turner persented in an address to the American Historical Association in 1893. Essentially, the thesis states that the settlement of the frontier (which Turner defines as "the hither edge of free land" or "the edge of settlement") (1920, pp.3, 41) was a prime factor in the development of unique American social institutions and the American character. Previous to Turner, most historians viewed American society in terms of its European roots. Turner argued that *indigenous* forces, particularly the frontier, were instrumental in shaping American society. He writes:

> Into this vast shaggy continent of ours poured the first feeble tide of European settlement. European men, institutions, and ideas were lodged in the American wilderness, and this great American West took them to her bosom, taught them a new way of looking upon the destiny of the common man, trained them in adaptation to the conditions of the New World, to the creation of new institutions to meet new needs; and ever as society on her Eastern border grew to resemble the Old World in its social forms and its industry, ever, as it began to lose faith in the ideals of democracy, she opened new provinces, and dowered new democracies in her most distant domains with her material treasures and with the ennobling influence that the fierce love of freedom, the strength that came from hewing out a home, making a school and a church, and creating a higher future for his family, furnished to the pioneer (1920, p.267).

The most valuable contribution to humanity arising out of the frontier, according to Turner, was the development of democracy (1938, p.219). It flourished, he argues, as a result of the refusal of western pioneers to be dominated by eastern propertied interests (1920, p.249). Since the settlers had to struggle and endure great hardships in order to establish themselves on the frontier, they felt that they had a moral right to take part in the governing of the territory in which they lived. This, combined with the individualistic, egalitarian spirit generated on the frontier, he saw as a major impetus to democracy.

Other institutions seen as arising out of the frontier experience include the American political system as a whole, sectarian religion, the public school system and the state university. Moreover, Turner maintains that the aforementioned frontier spirit crystalized to form a national psyche, which is comprised of a staunch belief in individualism, egalitarianism, competitiveness, inquisitiveness, nationalism, ruggedness, enthusiasm, the democratic creed and, perhaps above all, antipathy towards control or regulation in one's affairs (1938, pp.213, 220, 227-29).

A number of attempts have been made to adapt Turner's frontier thesis to the Canadian case. Perhaps the most comprehensive use of the frontier idea in Canadian historical writing is found in the work of A.R.M. Lower (1929; 1930; 1939; 1946). Like Turner, he argued that "North American democracy was forest-born" (1946, p.49), and that in both Canada and the United States democracy "has been the spontaneous product of the frontier and the forest" (1929). Lower attributed what he believed to be the "small" differences between Canadian and American democracy to three facets of Canadian history: a shorter and less "intense" frontier experience, a stronger and more recent old world connection, and the maintenance of the monarchy (1930).

Lower also viewed the Canadian frontier as generating a rugged, individualistic character type. Comparing the settlements of New France with contemporaneous British North American colonies to the south, he writes:

> Where conditions were so uniform as in the settler's attack on the forest, and where it was the worth of a man as a man, as an axe-swinging, forest-clearing, crop-sowing, animal, that counted, the same qualities came to the fore, the same scale of values tended to prevail. Men were measured by their abilites for the task in hand - the pragmatism of the new world emerged at once - and by their qualities as neighbors. There was not much room for differentiation in skills and still less differentiation in social class. The gentleman and the scholar did not count for much when it came to stump-pulling (1946, pp.48-49).

It is especially significant to an understanding of western separatism and western protest in general that a number of scholars have viewed several occurrences of conflict in Canadian history as explicable ultimately in terms of the frontier thesis. Events analyzed in this manner include the Rebellion of 1837, the Clear Grit movement in Upper Canada in the 1850s, and the rise of farmers' movements in western Canada in the 1920s. Basically, the frontier perspective holds that these were moral battles waged between an egalitarian frontier and reactionary, Old World-type metropolitan areas that controlled the affairs of the frontier (Burkhardt, 1975, pp.16-17).

Lower, for instance, found the Rebellion of 1837 to be analogous to Andrew Jackson's campaign for democracy on the American frontier during the 1820s.[39] He viewed the

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[39] Although Jackson's efforts began on the frontier, they were carried on in Washington and elsewhere.

Rebellion as a quest by people imbued with the frontier spirit to abolish the Old World system of privilege, which was dominated by the propertied family compacts. The rebels, he suggests, were fighting to implement the democratic ideals generated on the Upper Canadian frontier (1929). S.D. Clark (1962, p.212) provides a similar analysis of the Rebellion.

Similarly, both Frank Underhill (1927) and Fred Landon (1941) use the frontier thesis to analyze the Clear Grit movement of the 1850s. The western areas of Upper Canada formed the Canadian frontier at this time, and the farmers in this region vehemently opposed "governmental extravagance, railroad peculation tariff discrimination against the farmer in favor of the commercial class, and general cynical indifference to the farming class and its needs" (Landon, 1941, pp.245-46). According to Underhill, the political instrument of this frontier region, the Clear Grits, were a "characteristic expression of frontier agrarian democracy" (1935, p.375), and "an expression of the 'frontier' in our Canadian politics just as Jacksonian Democracy or Lincoln Republicanism was in the politics of the United States" (1927, p.47).

During this period the Reform Party considered the dissolution of the union of Upper and Lower Canada as one possible solution to their problems in Upper Canada (Landon, 1941, pp.246-50), This suggestion, put forth by George Sheppard at the party convention of 1859, received consideral support from delegates representing the western section of the province, i.e. that part of the province which was on the farthest reaches of the frontier. It was ultimately rejected in favor of a form of federalism, chiefly because the eastern section of the province was economically dependent on Montreal, and because it was feared that dissolution would ultimately lead to annexation with the United States. Nonetheless, here one sees an early instance of support for political independence as a solution to grievances arising on the Canadian frontier. Perhaps then, as today, physical remoteness from the seat of power combined with a frontierist aversion to external control contributed to the formation of a separatist movement.

With regard to the Progressives, Underhill endeavors to make a connection between them and the Clear Grits. Writing in 1927, he states:.

> ...one is constantly being struck in reading the papers of [the 1860s] by the many points of similarity between the Clear Grit movement among the farmers of Upper Canada and the Progressive movements among prairie farmers to-day. Both are protests against much the same factors in Canadian life; and both have been defended or denounced by the contemporary press in much the same terms. The essence of the struggle which produced the deadlock of the 1860's was not that it was primarily a fight of Protestant against Catholic or of English against French, though both of these elements entered into it and embittered it. *It was primarily a struggle of West against East*; the then West being, like the modern West, in its social structure largely agricultural and its geographic position a long way from its markets; and the East, then as now, being dominated by transportation, banking and manufacturing interests which centered in Montreal (1927, pp. 48-49, my emphasis).

Although he introduces in the above analysis factors which are not contained in the frontier model, Underhill's description of the Clear Grits as "an expression of the frontier" and the close association he draws between them and the Progressives suggests that he considered the latter to be a frontier movement.

Similarly, S.D. Clark (1962) provides a frontierist interpretation of western farm movements such as the United Farmers of Alberta. He argues that the UFA used democratic innovations such as referendum and recall, rotation of offices and convention rule as "instruments of political separatism" (p.217). These experiments in democracy, he argues, were designed to allow those in frontier areas to exert control over their elected representatives, both federal and provincial, and hence free the frontier region from external control. Clark admits, however, that these pratices were largely ineffectual. Western separatists today include the policy of referendum and recall in their list of political changes for the west.[40]

The frontierist view that conflict between western and central Canada has historically involved a confrontation between those geographically and otherwise remote from the center of power and governments controlling the region provides valuable insights into the issue of western separatism. The perceived disenfranchisement of the west in 1980 and the sheer distance to Ottawa likely contributed to thoughts of breaking free from federal control. Moreover, a frontierist spirit of independence forms an important part of the western separatist ideology. Doug Christie, former 'national' leader of the WCC, writes:

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[40] The separatist's advocacy of this policy is discussed again later in this chapter.

> From the western shores of the Red River where the prairies spread away to the Rockies and the Rockies rise and fall to the Pacific, even to the western islands, there is a spirit abound in this land. It is the spirit of freedom and independence.
>
> It lived here long before the white man. It lived with Riel and Gabriel Dumont but it did not die with them. It lives with you and me today and it will not die with us.
>
> For where the spirit lives, death never shall be. We will one day see arise in this land, a nation dedicated to that pride and freedom. This dream will never die (1981, p.1).

Similarly, the aversion to government control commonly attributed to frontier dwellers is also found in the separatist ideology:

> The time has come for all courageous citizens to take a stand. This province was built by the blood, sweat and tears of courageous men and women who believed that they would prosper without dictatorial governments interfering with their lives. The systems they believed in were prosperous and productive. That belief was true until cunning men trained in manipulating the truth began to steal away our freedom, policy by policy (WCC pamphlet).

However, in considering the elements of frontierism in the separatist movement, we must be aware of the shortcomings of the frontier perspective. The frontier thesis has been the target of extensive criticism ever since it was formulated by Turner in the 1890s. Although it was popular in the 1920s and '30s, few modern historians espouse an unadulterated version of it today.

Criticism of its use to analyze American history has come from Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr. (1950) and Louis Hartz

(1964). Schlesinger argues that Jacksonian democracy was not a frontier movement, claiming that it grew out of the efforts of eastern workers and small businessmen. Likewise, Hartz contends on a more fundamental level that American institutions and culture have British and European origins, and thus that the frontier has not generated *unique* social institutions.

In a similar vein, Morris Zaslow (1948) states that democratization on the frontier was merely a part of a "world wide pattern of political upheaval", and that frontier democracy was restrictive, intolerant of minorities, and "conservative" (p.155). Moreover, he questions Turner's claim that democracy is essentially a product of the frontier by making reference to frontier societies which lacked an Anglo-Saxon political heritage, such as that of Russia, and which experienced a political development very different from the American case.

Comparable judgements of the frontier thesis have been made with regard to its adaptation to Canadian history. J.M.S. Careless (1948), for example, argues that although the Clear Grits were initially an agrarian movement, by the middle 1850s they fell under the control of an urban and professional group led by George Brown which was chiefly identified with the city of Toronto. Moreover, he holds that in the latter years of its existence the movement came to espouse urban, middle class British Liberalism rather than

North American frontier democracy.[41] Careless further holds that the Progressives did not represent a triumph of frontier individualism. He suggests that they stood for the establishment of favorable government controls, such as the Wheat Boards (1954). Moreover, like many Canadian historians, he argues that metropolitan interests were largely responsible for activity on the Canadian frontier, and cites Macdonald's National Policy as an example of this (1954).

Similarly, George Stanley (1940) points out that there were significant differences between the way the frontier was settled in Canada and the way it was settled in the United States. This, he contends, makes the Turnerian concept of the frontier inapplicable to the Canadian case. He suggests that in Canada, unlike on the American frontier, settlement was largely government encouraged, and was preceded by the building of the railroads and the establishment of a frontier police force (p.111). This, he claims, did not allow free-wheeling individualism to flourish in Canada as it did in the United States. More significantly, like Hartz, Stanley argues that frontier culture and institutions were *derivative* rather than original. He claims that the existence of two very different New World societies, namely "autocratic, feudalistic Catholic New France" and "self-governing, individualistic,

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[41] He does conclude, however, that in 1850 the group "displayed sympathy for American ideas" (1948, p.38).

Puritan, Protestant New England" demonstrated the inability of the frontier to generate original kinds of societies and culture (1940, p.106). He argues that had the frontier the qualities attributed to it by Turner, it would have generated similar frontier societies in these two areas which were significantly different from their European counterparts.[42]

The frontier thesis has also been attacked on the grounds that it ignores the effects of social class. Hofstadter (1949), for example, holds that the rise of Jeffersonian and Jacksonian democracy is more intelligible in terms of social class than a conflict between the frontier and the east (p.439).

However, critics of the frontier thesis may have dealt too harshly with Turner and his followers. Although he placed great emphasis on the role played by the frontier, Turner did not claim that it was the only influence in American history. To this effect he states:

> There is not *tabula rasa*. The stubborn American environment is there with its imperious summons to accept its conditions; the inherited ways of doing things are also there;.... (1938, pp.228-29)

Similarly, although Lower claims that North American democracy was "forest born", he also states that the possession of "certain theoretical positions" was necessary for its implementation (1930).

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[42] Works have been written, however, which endeavor to show that frontier life *did* generate similar, unique qualities among early French and British settlements. These include Lower (1946, pp.47-50), Burt (1940) and Sage (1938).

The frontier thesis exposes factors relevant to western separatism, but we must also look beyond it to find sound macro-theoretical foundations on which to base our understanding of the movement. The next theoretical perspective to be discussed, staple theory, examines some economic factors which must be brought into the analysis.

3.2 Staple Theory

Staple theory, which grew out of the debate surrounding Turner's work, was introduced to Canadian scholarship by W.A. Mackintosh of Queen's University in 1922. Building on the work of G.S. Calendar, an American economic historian, Mackintosh made the seminal statement that "[t]he prime requisite of colonial prosperity is the colonial staple" (1923, p.14). Staples may be defined as raw materials or natural resources produced primarily for export.

Staple theory may be divided into two distinct sub-theories: the 'developmental' model and the 'dependency' model. Before drawing a distinction between the two, however, we shall first outline the common ground held by both approaches. Both state that economic activity in new countries or regions (such as the northern half of North America in the 1700s) centers around the export of various staple products to imperial centers; and both claim that in older or more highly developed countries, the main impetus for growth and capital formation is secondary manufacturing. It is assumed that the "new" or undeveloped area has a small domestic market and an abundance of land and resources relative to labor and capital, which creates a comparative advantage in staple exports (Watkins, 1963, p.144). It is also assumed that a strong export demand for staple products exists, that there are significant economies of scale in most secondary manufacturing activities, and that high transport costs preclude the export of manufactured goods from the new or undeveloped region (Richards and Pratt, 1979, p.305). Both approaches to staple theory hold that a thriving staple export sector gives rise to increased aggregate income which is then spent in the region, and which therefore creates a second round of income. This multiplier effect proceeds indefinitely, and expands the local economy. "Backward" and "forward" linkages are also seen as generating additional income (Richards and Pratt, 1979, p.306). "Backward linkages" refers to additional income created in industries which grow and provide inputs to the staple sector, such as the farm implements industry. "Forward linkages" refers to increases in income created in industries which use staples as a factor of production. An example of the latter is the textile industry.

The developmental model suggests that through the three linkage processes described above, a staple-based economy may grow and diversify into secondary manufacturing and thus end its dependence on staple exports. Once this stage is reached, secondary industry becomes the prime impetus and source of wealth in the economy, and the region or country concerned progresses to a state of economic autonomy. Adherents of the developmental model maintain that Canada's development may be traced by observing how a succession of staples have been exported to imperial centers: fish, furs, timber, wheat, minerals, and energy resources. They argue that this led to a process of diversification, secondary manufacturing and ultimately economic autonomy for Canada. MacKintosh, for example, uses this version of staple theory to explain how Canada developed in this manner:

> That period of expansion from about 1900 to 1913 was not only a period of growing western settlement, but a time of solid progress in almost all parts of the Dominion. It is as significant for the eastern manufacturer and the Northern Ontario miner as for the western homesteader. A staple was exported to world markets; and, as southern cotton started the wheels of American industry and commerce in the nineteenth century, western wheat has permitted the initial steps of the Canadian advance in the twentieth. It was only one commodity, and there were many; but it was the basis of that period of prosperity. The world staple primed the pump of Canadian industry (1923, pp.24-25).

The dependency version of staple theory was developed by Harold Innis in his great works *The Fur Trade In Canada* (1930) and *The Cod Fisheries* (1940). Although it was initially a theory of economic growth, Innis developed the staple theory into a conceptual framework that helps to illuminate the cultural and political history of Canada, as well as its economic progress. He introduced the idea, for example, that the nature of the staple produced greatly affects the institutional development of the staple producing region. Thus his work demonstrates that the early fur trade gave rise to a centralized constitutional system, an east-west flow of trade, a capital intensive defence and supply network, and the lifestlye of the *coureur de bois*; whereas the cod fisheries were conducive to a decentralized constitutional pattern, small scale, low capital investment enterprises, parochialism, and a commitment to the sea. (See also Parker, 1977, p.557; and Watkins, 1963, p.154.)

Innis also brought to light a number of problems that are encountered by a staple-based society, which collectively form the basis for the dependency model. He shows, for example, that prosperity in the staple producing area is dependent on foreign (imperial) demand, which may fluctuate unpredictably. Demand fluctuations may be a result of: 1)something as trivial as a change in fashions in the metropolis (which had a devastating effect on the fur trade in Canada); 2)an exogenous change in technology (such as a shift from the use of sail power to steam engines in marine craft); 3)the level of international competition in staple production; or, among other factors, 4)a change in the type of secondary manufacture produced in the imperial center. Innis and subsequent staple theorists show that as demand declines or is eliminated, a search for a new export staple must be undertaken. Prosperity for the staple producing region in such a situation depends on the ability of its residents to find a substitute staple and adjust to its production. If it is unable to make the shift to a new staple, the region is caught in a "staple trap" and may have to rely on subsistence farming (Watkins, 1963, p.151-52) or experience rapid de-population.

Dependency in the staple society is exacerbated by the tendency of the imperial center to maximize surplus appropriated in the metropole and minimize capital formation in the hinterland (Naylor, 1972, p.2). That is, proponents of the dependency model argue that there is a potential imbalance in market power between the staple exporting region and the imperial center which determines the terms of trade between the two areas. Also, the staple producing region may experience capital "leakages" through the purchase of imported goods, savings, or taxes imposed by governments for which there is no proportionate local expenditure. Moreover, foreign ownership of staple industries may lead to regional capital outflows through the transfer of interest and profits to foreign owners (Richards and Pratt, 1979, p.306).

The dependency school argues further that staple-based economies may never significantly diversify and expand into secondary industry due to revenue leakages, an inferior market position, military/political pressure, etc. For example, Innis claimed that Canada would not be able to transcend its basic role as a raw materials supplier to more advanced economies. Indeed, his comment that "Canada [had] moved from colony to nation to colony" (1952, p.121) reflects Canada's inability throughout its history to industrialize on a major scale.

Followers of the dependency model point out that in addition to economic dependence, staple producing areas may also be politically and culturally dependent on the imperial centers with which they trade. Hence Innis writes: "Canada remained British in spite of free trade and chiefly because she continued as an exporter of staples to a progressively industrialized mother country" (1930, p.385).

Staple theory may be useful in understanding the history of protest in western Canada, including the current separatist movement. Since it is essentially a staple producing region, many of western Canada's economic and political grievances lend themselves to analysis using the staple model. For instance, in the first half of this century, the prairies suffered the classic fate of staple producing regions in which prosperity is dependent on the price and demand level for the staple product, both of which are 'notoriously variable'. During the Depression, for example, when wheat prices plummeted, the region's near total dependence on grain exports had a devastating effect on the local economy. Moreover, throughout this century the plight of grain farmers has been compounded by the high level of competition in domestic grain production. This has had the effect of keeping grain prices low. In 1936, for example, there were approximately 300,000 grain farms in the west (Fowke, 1957, p.100). Also, a high level of international competition results in a low world price for grain. Western farmers were traditionally incensed by the fact that although there was a high level of competition and price fluctuation in grain production, there was only limited competition and small price changes in secondary industry, due to the tariff and the oligopolistic nature of the secondary manufacturing industry. This situation, farmers recognized, contributed to high prices for comsumer goods but low prices for grain.

The history of agrarian protest in Canada may be viewed as a demand by farmers that governments take action to ameliorate the competitive inferiority of agriculture, which as we have seen is a function of the unstable world market and a high level of competition in grain production. When governments refused or were unable to improve the market position of farmers, the latter organized cooperatives and wheat pools in an effort to shift the balance of power in the market system (Phillips, 1978a, p.79).

At one point, namely during the Depression, the position of grain farmers was so desperate that it spawned a separatist movement. During the winter of 1930-31 in Saskatchewan large meetings were held at which farmers demanded that the four western provinces secede from the rest of Canada[43] (Lipset, 1950/1971, p.108). The separatist movement was most popular among grain farmers, but gained little support from livestock producers (Lipset, 1950/1971, p.108). One explanation for the lack of support for the movement among livestock producers is that they are not as directly affected by the vagaries of a market economy as are grain farmers. That is, the fact that only grain farmers supported this drastic measure may be a reflection of the latter's greater economic vulnerability, which arises out of their role as exporters of a single staple product.

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[43] This was likely the first incarnation of West-Fed. See Chapter Two, p.22.

Also, Naylor's (1972) argument that the imperial center endeavors to maximize surplus appropriated in the metropole and minimize capital formation in the staple producing region may be helpful in understanding western discontent. Fowke (1957) reveals that initially farmers had no alternative but to sell their grain to a small number of large elevator companies which were owned and operated by central Canadian interests (p.115). The CPR would not allow the building of elevators or grain loading platforms near their railroad except by the large elevator companies, who would conspire to keep grain prices low and hence capture most of the economic rent. Farmers also complained that elevator agents undergraded wheat, made unnecessary deductions for unclean wheat and short-weighted the grain, thereby making additional unearned profits for the companies (Lipset, 1950/1971, p.58).

Similarly, the grievances that western separatists and other disgruntled westerners have with the federal government over natural resource revenue sharing and control may be viewed in terms of a staple producing region seeking to maximize its share of the economic rent generated from staple production.[44] The oil pricing disputes between Edmonton and Ottawa in 1980-81 that the separatists made so much of may be understood in terms of a conflict between a staple producing region and a more populous, highly industrialized metropole. The goal of both regions is to capture as much economic rent as possible from oil production.

If one accepts an underlying assumption of staple theory – that staple based areas retain their political allegiance to more highly industrialized areas due to an economic dependence on the latter (as was the case with Canada and Great Britain)– one could argue that the security of Confederation was undermined in the years 1980-82. It seems that in the west during this period, like several other periods of Canadian history, allegiance to Canada was viewed by some as an impediment to local prosperity, especially as regards the petroleum industry. Separatists at this time proposed that westerners would be better served as both producers and consumers by leaving Confederation, establishing world prices for oil, and allowing free trade in consumer goods.[45] Larry Pratt describes the separatist position on natural resources as follows:

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[44] That revenue leakages caused by foreign ownership of western industry are not a major issue in western Canadian politics is at first blush astounding, but it seems that the American presence is viewed as essential to the region's economic prosperity and development, and that the American corporations are seen as allies in the fight against Ottawa. Alberta has a greater proportion of American ownership in its economy than any other province (Stevenson, 1983, p.15).

[45] See pp.85-86 for a more extensive discussion of the proposed economic benefits of an independent west.

> Among the most potent arguments of western Canada's separatists is that provincially owned natural resources cannot be protected from a predatory national government within the rules and institutions of Canadian federalism. The pattern of federal policies since 1973 in the areas of natural-resource management and taxation, and particularly in the field of national energy policy, provides incontrovertible evidence, say the separatists, of Ottawa's true intentions towards the resource-rich hinterlands of western Canada - in a word, to plunder.
>
> ...[The separatists claim that t]he West is prosperous temporarily, yet this prosperity is jeopardized by the provinces' inability to control their resource wealth. If westerners hope to protect their resources and to appropriate the full beneficial interest from their development, then, the secessionists argue, they must opt for political independence (1981, p.155).

Thus separatism can be looked upon, at least partially, as an attempt to maximize the revenues and economic development deriving from an export staple.

Like the frontier thesis, staple theory has been subject to considerable criticism. A fundamental weakness of staple theory is that it ignores the social relations of production inherent in capitalist economies - it fails to consider the issue of class domination and exploitation (McNally, 1981). Another shortcoming of staple theory is that it underplays the fact that although the export of staples may generate secondary industry in a particular country, the economic development so generated is usually *regional* in nature. For instance, in Canada major industrialization has only occurred, by and large, in southern Ontario and Montreal. Other problems with staple theory include the slighting of cultural, linguistic and religious factors in history. It also ignores the effect of nationalism on political and economic behavior. The final theoretical position to be discussed, the metropolis-hinterland perspective, expands on and develops many of the ideas contained in staple theory.

3.3 The Metropolis-Hinterland Perspective

The roots of the metropolis-hinterland perspective can be traced back to the work of Marx (Frank, 1967, pp.8-9), but the earliest explicit use of the concept was likely made by N.S.B. Gras in his 1922 work *An Introduction to Economic History*. Gras' theory of economic development, which involves the idea that metropolitan centers have historically expanded and dominated both urban and rural hinterlands, was a major influence in the development of the perspective. Gras maintained that in the 19th century the metropolitan centers of London, Berlin, Paris, New York, Tokyo and Shanghai dominated large hinterland areas, in fact virtually the whole world, through a vast financial, commercial and communications network.

This perspective has been developed and enriched by several social scientists since the time of Gras' writing. "Metropolis" has come to be defined as a large urban center where secondary industry, technical innovation, bureaucratic administration, capital accumulation and control, and political power are located; "hinterland" refers to a relatively underdeveloped or colonial area which exports raw materials (and sometimes people) to a metropolis (Usher, 1972, p.28; Davis, 1971, p.12).

The relationship between the metropolis and the hinterland is viewed as expolitative or parasitic. Economic surplus is drained from the hinterland into the metropolis through the latter's exercise of its superior economic, military or constitutional power (Burkhardt, 1975, p.19). The metropolis uses the appropriated surplus to foster its own economic development (Frank, 1967, p.9). Thus Kuusinen et al. write:

> It is characteristic of capitalism that the development of some countries takes place at the cost of suffering and disaster for the peoples of other countries. For the soaring development of the economy and culture of the so-called "civilized world", a handful of capitalist powers of Europe and North America, the majority of the world's population, the peoples of Asia, Africa, Latin America, and Australia paid a terrible price. The colonization of these continents made possible the rapid development of capitalism in the West. But to the enslaved peoples, it brought ruin, poverty, and monstrous political oppression (quoted in Frank, 1967, p.8).

It is held that metropolis-hinterland relationships operate on a national and local basis as well as on an international level. Hence although a country may be an international hinterland, it may have within it one or more 'entrepots' or intermediate metropoli which act as agents or middle men for the major metropoli. For example, Vancouver, Calgary, Toronto and Montreal may be thought of as entrepots for Tokyo, Dallas, New York and London respectively. Entrepots, it is argued, capture a portion of the economic surplus and in doing so create an *internal* metropolis-hinterland relationship. Hence a chain-like series of exploitation is said to occur whereby the major metropolis exploits the entrepot, the entrepot the small towns, the small towns the countryside, and so on.

Furthermore, scholars using this perspective point out that with economic domination also comes cultural domination. It is argued that the hinterland comes to view its own culture as inferior to that of the metropolis, which leads hinterland people to believe that the standards of excellence held in the metropolis are universal. Hence the hinterland typically suffers from a cultural inferiority complex (Mathews, 1973, p.219). Peter Usher (1972) argues that the cultural domination arising out of metropolis-hinterland relationships is not restricted to capitalist countries. Socialist nations too, it seems, come to believe in the superiority of the metropolitan culture.

Given the nature of the metropolis-hinterland perspective as described above, one can see that it provides a useful complement to standard Marxian class analysis. The geographic element introduced brings to light regional as well as class exploitation - a hinterland worker, for instance, may be considered a victim of class *and* regional inequities. Thus the theory provides a basis of analysis for regional and international economic disparites and underdevelopment (e.g. Frank, 1967; Phillips, 1978b) which are not explicable in terms of social class alone (Usher, 1972, p.28).

Many students of Canadian society and history have viewed the Canadian case in terms of the metropolis-hinterland model. Indeed, although the categorization of any academic is probably haphazard at best, much of the work of Innis, Lower, Creighton and the staple theorists in general seeks to demonstrate that Canada's early history was essentially a series of hinterland reactions to foreign metropolitan initiatives. The element of exploitation, however, has not been paramount in their analyses. They have preferred to view the hinterland position as one of 'dependency' rather than exploitation, and consider Canada's prolonged attachment to Great Britain as basically advantageous.

On a more explicit level, A. K. Davis (1970; 1971; 1972) argues that Canada must be understood historically in terms of its role as a hinterland of France and Britain, and currently as a hinterland of the American empire. Moreover, metropolis-hinterland conflicts *within* Canada form an important part of his analysis. Following Fowke (1957), he argues that throughout the history of western Canadian settlement, residents of the western hinterland have struggled to improve their position within the "system of capitalist expansion and exploitation" (1972, p.38). One reaction of the western hinterland to the railroads, the grain exchange, elevator companies and the eastern dominated political parties, he claims, was to bring to power the Social Credit Party and the CCF. Similarly, he argues that

Quebec, like the west, may be viewed as an "investment frontier" controlled in the interests of Anglo-Canadian and later American capital, and that the recent drive for independence in Quebec reflects its hinterland status (1972, p.38).

In his use of the metropolis-hinterland framework, Davis endeavours to show that hinterland areas chronically fight back for an improved position within the ongoing system. Thus he proposes a theory of social change whereby the latter results, although not exclusively, from metropolis-hinterland oppositions. Davis also claims that metropolis-hinterland conflict may be latent or go unrecognized due to economic prosperity or the formation of temporary alliances to combat larger issues (1971, p.12).

As suggested above, Davis is not alone in positing that metropolis-hinterland relationships operate within Canada. With regard to the west, Vernon Fowke (1957) endeavors to show that central Canadian interests have historically acted so as to maximize the economic position of central industry and commerce at the expense of the western wheat farmer. Similarly, C.B. Macpherson argues that "[i]t has become a commonplace of Canadian economic history that the main economic policies of the central government toward the Canadian west ever since Confederation, and even before, have been designed in the interests of eastern capital" (1953, p.6). Innis too has commented on the west's position in Confederation:

> ...the dominance of eastern Canada over western Canada seems likely to persist. Western Canada has paid for the development of Canadian nationality, and it would appear that it must continue to pay. The acquisitiveness of eastern Canada shows no signs of abatement (1923/1971, p.294).

Doug Owram (1981) provides an historical overview of the metropolis-hinterland dynamic as it relates to western Canada. He argues that the west's hinterland position is still a major source of irritation among westerners. A sense of injustice still arises, he notes, from the perception that the political and economic control of the region lies in central Canada, and that national policy is set in the interests of that region. The new wealth in the west makes this powerlessness harder to bear than in previous historical periods, he suggests, because the federal government is seen as thwarting the west's historic aspirations of metropolitan status just when the region seemed ready to achieve it.[46] Owram also points out that the west's recent prosperity (which has declined somewhat in the short time since he wrote) makes an independent west more economically feasible today than in any previous historical period. He writes:

> The west was, in its early days, too much of a frontier region to consider going it alone and then, through the 1930s and for a time after, too poor to make such an option worth considering. The new wealth of the region has changed this and many Westerners, especially in Alberta, believe that being part of Canada imposes a financial obstacle to the West's further prosperity. ...Given the economic

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[46] Larry Pratt (1981, p.164-66) argues that the Conservative government in Alberta has been "province building" and even "nation building" in recent years.

> burden on top of all the other problems of Confederation, separatists argue, why not go it alone? (1981, pp.61-62)

Western separatists argue, although somewhat unsystematically, that central Canada through its superior political and economic power exploits the natural resources of the west, and uses the appropriated economic surplus to further its own development. Separatists assert that the federal government uses devices such as the tariff on manufactured goods, the NEP, statuatory freight rates, etc. to drain capital from the west into central Canada. Warren Blackman, a WCC supporter who teaches economics at the University of Calgary, uses this argument in an attempt to demonstrate that an "exploitation economy which draws income and wealth from western provinces to central Canada" (1977, p.422) exists by estimating the opportunity cost incurred by Alberta through its membership in Confederation. To do this he hypothesizes an independent Alberta, free from the existing freight rate structure, tariff system, federal regulation of natural resources, and fiscal transfers of wealth such as equalization payments. He then compares his estimation of the wealth which would be generated in an independent Alberta from 1971 to 1981 to actual and projected levels of Gross Provincial Product for the same time period. He concludes that "economic activity" in Alberta is 35% less than what it would be if the province were independent (p.430). Blackman ends his article on a rather ominous note:

> In a word, a Victorian exploitation economy consisting of one part of the country performing the traditional role of primary producers for the benefit of another part of the country's manufacturing is no longer appropriate to the intense competition of a latter twentieth century world. It matters little whether Canada becomes a group of autonomous, independent regions or remains united in Confederation, the advantages to be gained from a rational economic organization are great. At the moment Canada makes little economic sense. We pay a price, in other words, for our continued membership in Confederation and growing numbers of people are coming to the conclusion that the cost is just no longer worth it (p.430).[47]

There are several other indications of a feeling of hinterland frustation among the separatists. In a manner reminiscent of the Progressives, for example, the WCC declares that:

> Western Canada sells its resources at, or less than, world prices. Due to tariffs, however, Western Canadians are obliged to pay higher than world prices for manufactured goods. The result is a transfer of wealth from the West to Ontario and Quebec (WCC information sheet).

The National Energy Program, which requires that domestic oil prices remain below world levels, is seen as a major mechanism of this type of exploitation. Other means of economic domination cited by the movement include a system of federal taxation that purportedly favors Ontario and Quebec:

> In 1973 to '74 British Columbians paid Ottawa $600 million more than was spent there by the Federal Government. In the previous eight years over $4 Billion was transferred to central Canada in this manner (WCC pamphlet).[48]

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[47] A critique of this argument is forthcoming on pp.89-90.
[48] The WCC and West-Fed rarely cite their sources for data such as these.